Essays on Purāṇa-Tradition

S. N. ROY

The essays in this anthology were written as part of the author's project `Origin and Growth of Purāṇa Tradition' sanctioned by the Indian Council of Historical Research. Their collation in the volume makes possible the presentation of valuable data, most of which was not available before. In these essays the author analyses the interaction between Purāṇic and non-Purāṇic source material, examines and unravels the conceptualism enwrapping the complex and layered reality embedded in Purāṇic passages, evaluates Purāṇic passages to extricate and identify specific problems of interpretation connected with their layered structure, and through the method of simultaneous reading and interactivity of resources, assess the validity of the assertion that 'what is not found in the Vedic tradition is found in the Smṛitis, and that not found in the Smṛitis is found in the Purāṇas.' The anthology seeks to highlight the value of the Purāṇic code for unveiling the mysteries of beliefs and practices rife in the past and their continuation in contemporary times in sustained or modified froms.

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Essays on Puāṇa-Tradition

S.N. Roy

RAKA PRAKASHAN
ALLAHABAD

To
My revered Guru
Professor G.C. Pande

Contents

PREFACE IX-XII

AYODHYĀ IN PURĀṆA-TRADITION ASPECTS AND PROBLEMS 1-33

BHAKTI IN PURĀṆA-TRADITION 35-46

MOUNTAIN MERU IN PURĀṆA-TRADITION 47-56

PURĀṆA-TRADITION AND KĀLIDĀSA 57-65

INTERPRETATION AND APPLICATION OF SAMUPABṚIMHAṆA IN PURĀṆA-TRADITION 67-74

HISTORIOGRAPHICAL ANALYSIS OF SOME ĀKHYĀNAS IN PURĀṆA-TRADITION 75-100

PREFACE

The essays collated in the present work form part of my project "Origin and Growth of Purāṇa Tradition" sanctioned by Indian Council of Historical Research, major part of which has already been published (Vide, Historical and Cultural Studies in the Purāṇas; Raka Prakashan, Allahabad, 2003). For certain unaviodable reasons these essays could not be included in the earlier work. In all there are six essays, some of which have also been presented in various Seminars and Conferences.

Essay No. 1, It deals with Ayodhyā in Purāṇa Tradition. It has been shown that the Purāṇa-passages have reference to three strata of compilation. Passages of the early stratum allude to archaic Ayodhyā and to its traditional kings. Under these rulers, Ayodhyā proved to be the nerve-centre of political power and witnessed phenomenal growth of Vedic rituals. The period of this early or archaic stratum can roughly be fixed between 3rd and 2nd millemium B.C. We can not be precise on the period of the middle stratum. However, the related passages breathe the atmosphere of circa 2nd century B.C. Passages of the 3rd stratum have reference to the early medival period of Indian History, when the Vedic rituals had almost fallen into disuse and tīrthas were playing dominant role in the religious history of India.

Essay No. 2, It is devoted to Bhakti in Purāṇa-tradition. It has been shown that Purāṇa concept of bhakti was aimed at the creation of a commodious atmosphere for social harmony and re-adjustment of Varṇāśramadharma without negating its original motive. The Purāṇa-passages show that conception of fatherhood of God and bhakti was indigenous to India and in no way they received any kind of impetus owing to the beliefs of Christion communities upon the Bhāgavata reformers. It is emphasized that the monotheistic bhakti doctrine or mystic emotionalism was a sacred legacy of the Purāṇa-tradition and as such the theory, that it was due to the influence of Islamic mysticism or Sufism does not correspond to the actual state of affars.

In essay No. 3, a rough outline of the multitudinous aspects of Mountain Meru is given. It has been stressed that, the panorama of Mountain Meru which is revealed by the cumulative evidence of cosmographical data, geographical details and literary passages can not be projected in a few words or in a few lines or in a few paragraphs or in a few pages. It demands a multiplex excercise and well-weighed moderate judgement without underestimating or overestimating the value of the evidence so for assessed by the analysts, traditionalists and observers. Actually one can not make any dogmatic statement and can talk only in terms of possibility and probability in ascertaining the shape, size, encompassment of Mountain Menu.

In essay No 4, attempt has been made to compare the passages of Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa with those of the works of Kālidāsa. It has been shown that the passages of Brahmāṇda Purāṇa were composed in an age when the Vaidarbhī rīti and its master had become much popular and narrators and evologists were making conscious effort to popularize their compositions taking incentive from Kumārasambhava, Meghadūta and Raghuvaṁśa which are the unique compostions of Vaidarbhī rīti. The crucial question which has been raised in this context is ascertaining the date of Kālidāsa on the basis of whatever is presented in this note. It has been shown that no absolute answer can be given and we can talk only in terms of tentativeness, passibility and approximation. The Purāṇa-passage under reference appears to be appendage in an early text and not its original part and presumably it can dated around 400 A.D. The related verses on the Purāṇa-passage indicate that composer is indebted to Kālidāsa not only in the exposition of ideas but also in the appropriation of phraseology, revealing sometimes even cases of verbatim reproductions. It has been shown that we can take a moderate stand in support of the theory which places Kālidāsa in the pre-Gupta period.

In essay No. 5, under the caption "Interpretation and Application of Samupabṛiṁhaṇa in Purāṇa-Tradition," it has been shown that a number of Purāṇa-passages point to the misapplication of the age-old Purāṇa technique of Samupabṛiṁhaṇa. The said technique was initially aimed at the incorportion of the current socio-religious changes without negating the original forms of the archaic tradition. It was a 'reonciled presentation of the older tradition with the new institutional development in the society'. But the sectarian rivalry and sectional bias in the early medieval and medieval periods of Indian History was so very dominant that the Purāṇa-authors could not carry on the older integrity, and consequently in many respects the extant Purāṇa-passages do not reveal so much the historical developments of the time as they do reveal cases of mishandling in these texts by the later compilers. Thus without taking proper caution one can not regard the existing Purāṇa-texts as genuine and reliable representives of socio-religious developments of India's past.

In essay No. 6, entitled 'Historiographical Analysis of Some Ākhyānas in Purāṇa-tradition', three Ākhyānas have been taken into account. These are as under; Māyāmoha-ākhyana Liṅgodbhava-ākhyāna and the ākhyana related to Solar-cult. In ākhyāna no. 1, it has been observed after Kane that the Purāṇas played a substantive role in bringing out the decline and disappearance of Buddhism by emphasizing and assimilating some of the principles of Buddhism such as ahimsā, by accepting Buddha as an avatāra of Viṣṇu, by adaptating vegeterianism as a high form of austerity, by making use of monasteries and asceticism as stated in such smṛitis as those of Manu and Yājñavalkya. The contention has been okayed that it was through the Paurāṇika literature that Hinduism secured its revival and the downfall of Buddhism. In ākhyāna No. 2 it has been shown that the Purāṇa-texts in their entirety have no answer to the natural query whether or not the phallic worship was non-

Vedic or non-Āryan in origin. The passages under reference simply reveal the Purāṇic technique applied for the meaning of the term 'Linga' used invariably for phallus as different from the meaning which had probably evoked hatred against it. The Purāṇa-passages reveal in clear terms that the term significs a special attribute called **tamas** without which the two other attributes, namely, **rajas** and **sattva** can not generate the matter contributing to the formation of the universe. This technique must have served as a competent device for making an addition to the Vedic tradition of what is sometimes supposed to have been outside the framework of Vedic traditon. In ākhyāna No. 3, it has been stressed that during the period when Sun-worship was being blended, an orthodox group of Hindu society shaped it according to the demand of the age, but did not acknowledge the foreign contribution to the acceleration of the Solar-cult. They attempted to maintain its indigenous framework to a remarkable extent, by associating with it the popular elements of Hindu rites. This step of the indiginous devotees contributed to the growth of Solar-cult in no less degree than the introduction of image-warship. One of the Purāṇa-texts, namely, the Matsya Purāṇa, is so much enwrapped by the passages alluding to solar-vratas that it becomes difficult of regard the role of Magian pricsts as entirely responsible for the later growth of Solar-cult in India.

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AYODHYĀ IN PURĀṆA-TRADITION ASPECTS AND PROBLEMS

Before we actually touch upon the topic of the present note, it would be worthwhile to remark after A.S. Altekar that there is nothing unscientific or unhistorical in utilizing the data of the Purāṇic geneologies of pre-Pāṇḍava period for reconstructing contemporary history after taking all due precautions. He points out that the various pre-Bhārata war dynasties mentioned in the Purāṇas are as real and historical as the Śiśunāga or the Mauryas or the Āndhras.[1] Equally significant is the observation of A.D. Pusalker that the royal geneologies in the Purāṇas embody many genuine historical traditions of great antiquity which have not been otherwise preserved.[2] The fact can hardly been denied that the Purāṇa texts contain the earliest traditional history, and much of their material is old and valuable. To the researchers of ancient Indian history, the Purāṇa tradition introduces Ayodhyā as a powerful kingdom in north India.[3] It was under the command of the Ikshvāku rulers of the Solar dynasty. According to the legendary accounts housed in the Purāṇa tradition Manu Vaivasvata was the originator of the human race. He was the original ruler, who framed rules and laws of government and collected a sixth of the produce of the land as a tax to meet administrative expenses. The collated Purāna-text suggested by Pargier[4] shows that Ikshvāku was the eldest son of Manu. He was the first king of Ayodhyā and Manu gave him Madhyadeśa. Ikshvāku had a hundred sons of whom Vikukṣi was also known as Śaśāda and he succeeded Ikshvāku in the Ayodhyā kingdom. In this connection Purāṇas also allude to the Vāsishṭhas, who claim to have a mysterious origin. They claim to have descended from Mitrāvaruṇa in the current

Manvantara. Other Purāna versions make the first Vasishṭha one of the mind-born sons of Brahmā in the Svāyambhuva Manvantara.[5] Right from the early days the Vāsiṣṭhas have been connected as heriditary priests with the king of Ayodhyā.

Kingdom of Ayodhya rose to an eminent position under the rule of Māndhātṛi of the Ikshvāku line. According to the Purāṇic account he was famous as a Cakravartin Samrāṭ. He was regarded as the fifth Avatāra of Vishṇu.[6] To his credit he is said to have performed a hundred Aśvamedhas and Rājasūyas. The confines of the kingdom of Ayodhyā were extended under his rule. Besides the neighbouring Paurava and Kānyakubja realms, he is said to have conquered the Druhyas and Āṇavas ruling over the north-west frontiers. In addition the Haihayas in the Deccan were also subjugated. Māndhātṛi was succeeded by his eldest son Purukutsa on the throne of Ayodhyā. It is significant that Purukutsa is mentioned in the Ṛigveda as a contemporary of Sudāsa, and a subjugator of the Dāsas. Trāsadasyu is said to have been born as the son of Purukutsa. He was born at a time of great distress when the famous Dāsarājña battle was going on.[7]

There is no doubt that Ayodhyā enjoyed paramount position during the reigns of Māndhātṛi, Purukutsa and Trāsadasyu. For a long period of time we do not meet any supreme ruler till we come to Trayyāruṇa, Satyavrata-Triśanku and Harishcandra. The veteran Purāṇic scholar Kirfel has given a vivid account of the life and career of Satyavrata-Triśanku.[8] According to the narratives of the Purāṇas he was expelled by his father at the instance of the family priest. He was forced to live the life of a Cāṇḍāla for twelve years. Triśanku was not called back to the throne of Ayodhyā even though Trayyāruṇa had died while the former was still wandering in the woods. During his exile Triśanku supported the starving family of Viśvāmitra, who had renounced the kingdom and had resorted to forest for the sake of penance. After his return from the forest Viśvāmitra learnt the generosity of Triśanku. With a view to humiliating his antagonist Vasishṭha and to paying gratitude to his benefactor he managed to instal Triśanku on the throne of

Ayodhyā. Triśanku was succeeded by Harishchandra, who figures in the Purāṇic narratives as an incarnation of honesty and integrity. Next important ruler of Ayodhyā in the aforementioned dynasty was Sagara. He was born in the hermitage of Aurva who trained the prince in archery and specially instructed him in Āgneyāstra. Sagara is narrated as a great hero of the Ikshvāku dynasty of Ayodhyā. He is said to have crushed the Haihayas and their outlandish allies including the Śakas, Yavanas, Kambojas, Pāradas etc. King Sagara was a great terror to the contemporary powers and was the supreme sovereign of the whole of North India.

Kingdom of Ayodhyā suffered a lot after Sagara's death. His eldest son Asamanjas proved to be unworthy. Consequently Sagara's grandson Aṁśumat was made king of Ayodhyā. The Ikshvāku dynasty regained its past glory under Aṁsumat's second successor Bhagīratha. He is celebrated as a Cakravartin Samrāṭ. He was of Śaivite leaning and is reputed to have brought down the sacred river Gaṅgā consequent upon his severe penances.

Bhagīratha's third successor was Ambarīsha Nābhāga. The Purāṇic account describes Ambarīsha as a powerful monarch under whose rule Ayodhyā reached the height of its glory. Ṛituparṇa was third in descent after Ambarīsh, who also figures in the well-known Nala-episode of the epic account.[9] Ṛituparṇa was succeeded by Sudāsa. Some scholars are inclined to identify him with the Vedic Sudāsa of Dāśarājña battle. A.D. Pusalker rightly thinks that, beyond mere similarity of names, there is nothing in support of this identification.[10] Sudāsa was succeeded by Mitrasaha, who is also known as Kalmashapāda. Next ruler of the dynasty was Asmaka. He was succeeded by Mūlaka, who is better known as Nārīkavaca. He is so known because he sought protection through women-folk. It is surmised that this precaution was taken by Mūlaka through fear of Paraśurāma. A.D. Pusalker points out fallacy in this observation, since Paraśurāma flourished generations before Asmaka.[11] It is not unlikely that the account, which is so very muddled in Purāṇa-texts points to the disturbed state of affairs in the Ayodhyā kingdom.

The Purāṇa-texts reveal that the kingdom of Ayodhyā again rose to prominence, when Dilīpa comes to the fore. He is described as Cakravartin Samrāṭ, who sided with the gods in the Devāsura-saṅgrāma. He was succeeded by his worthy son Raghu. Henceforth, the Ikshvāku dynasty came to be called Raghuvaṁśa after the name of the celebrated ruler Raghu. His Vaishṇavite leaning is well-known. He was a great conqueror, who also performed Viśvajit sacrifice. Besides possessing the requisite qualities of a vijigīshu, he was also considered as an ideal monarch. It is noteworthy that, in some of the Purāna-accounts he figures as the first king of Ayodhyā. Raghu was succeeded by Aja, who was married to the Vidarbha-princess Indumatī. From their union Daśaratha was born. The Purāṇa passages speak lot of the valour and prowess of Daśaratha, who tested his arms throughout the length and breadth of North India. During his reign boundaries of Ayodhyā kingdom were extended on all sides. Daśaratha had three principal queens, viz., Kauśalyā, Sumitrā and Kaikeyī. Combined testimony of Rāmāyaṇa and Purāṇas allude to the well-known narrative how Daśaratha was married to Kaikeyī on the condition that the son born of her would succeed him. Daśaratha remained without an heir for a long period of time. Ultimately under the advice of the family priest Vasishṭha, putrakāmeshṭhi was performed for securing male-issue. After the completion of the said ritual, four sons were born to Daśaratha. These four are enumerated as under; Rāma (born of Kauśalyā), Bharata (born of Kaikeyī), Lakshmaṇa and Śatrughna (born of Sumitrā).

There is no doubt that the story of Rāma is orignally recorded in the Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki. The fact, however, can not be denied that it is repeated in most of the Purāṇas, especially in their late passages.[12] From these accounts, it is revealed that Ayodhyā is the nerve-centre of the entire Rāma-episode, and it is from Ayodhyā that the narrative spreads further to South India beyond the Vindhyas. In this connection, A.D. Pusalker rightly observes that the narrative of Rāma is particularly important as "it brings South India definitely into view for the first time." In fact the Rāmayaṇa-Purāṇic account depicts Rāma as an ideal ruler who proved to be the torch-bearer of Aryan ideas and institutions into regions far and wide. The account also reveals that after Rāma, Ayodhyā lost its past glory and was destined to sink into insignificance in traditional history.

The chronological value of the Purāṇic account regarding the Ikshvāku kings of Ayodhyā has to be assessed with due precautions. The Purāṇa-texts unanimously describe Manu Vaivasvata as the originator of human race and all the dynasties mentioned in the Purāṇas are said to have sprung from him. The basic question which demands appropriate answer is to ascertain the antiquity of the Purāṇa-tradition. In this connection V.C. Bhattacharya seems to be fully justified that the set of traditions housed in the Purāṇas is basically founded on the Vedic heritage.[13] D.D. Kosambi on the other hand contends that some Purāṇic kings may be pre-Vedic.[14] S.B. Chaudhury speaks that the original traditions of all Purāṇic stories were current contemporaneously with the Vedic legends.[15] These observations bring into relief the antiquity of Purāṇa-material regarding Ayodhyā and its early traditional kings. It would not be out of spirit of the present note to argue that Ikshvāku-kings of Ayodhyā narrated in the Purāṇa account flourished earlier than the Bhārata war.

Attention may be invited here to the thesis of D.R. Mankad who has worked on the chronology and other details of Purāṇic antediluvium dynasty of Svayāmbhuva-Manu.[16] In the third part of his well-known work "Purāṇa Chronolgy" Mankad takes into account the Pre-Mahābhārata Ayodhyā dynasty. On the basis of Purāṇic and Greek evidence the noted scholar focuses attention to the dates of Manu-Vaivasvata and Bhārata war. He assigns 5976 B.C. to Manu-Vaivasvata and 3201 B.C. to Bhārata war. Mankad retouches his early thesis and the related observations in his papers on the 'Yugas'[17] and 'Manvantaras'[18]. He carries on these details again in another paper entitled "Some Tradidional Chronological considerations : Purāṇic : Buddhist : Jain.[19] In its essential aspects Mankad's methodology of Purāṇic Chronology seems arbitrary and artificial. The date brackets in his table may be reproduced here as under : date of Buddha's death 2056 B.C., date of Mahāvira's death 2051 B.C., date of accession of Mahāpadma Nanda 1986 B.C., date of accession of Chandragupta Maurya 1550 B.C.; date of coronation of Aśoka 1498 B.C., date of accession of Pushyamitra Śuṅga 1113 B.C., date of accession of Chandragupta I 3298 B.C. Date of accession of Samudragupta 3075 B.C. Chandragupta I of the Gupta dynasty has been treated as the contemporary of Alexander. Hence, it would not be safe to take for granted the date of Manu-Vaivasvat and the kings of Ayodhyā as suggested by Mankad. Before saying anything with definite certitude regarding the antiquity of Purāṇa material on the Ikshvāku kings of Ayodhyā, we have to take into consideration the following observations of the scholars who have worked on the subject.

1. Like the dynastic lists in Sumer and Egypt, the Indian lists also record pre-diluviam dynasties, though as may naturally be expected in such accounts, there is a large mixture of myths and legends.[20] As shown above Mankad focuses attention to the Purāṇic ante (pre) diluviam dynasty of Svāyambhuva Manu. But in his table Manu's date has been taken to be 5976 B.C. and date of Bhārata war 3201 B.C.

2. According to Pargiter the Purāṇic account can well be utilized for reconstructing the chronology beginning with Svāyambhuva Manu upto Bhārata-war. Pargiter contends that no less than 26 reigns intervened between king Adhisīmakṛishṇa and coronation of Mahāpadmananda.[21] Allowing a period of 18 years per reign, and taking accession of Mahāpadmananda in 382 B.C., the period of Adhisīmakṛishṇa would come to (26X18+382=) 850 B.C. Pargiter further adds a hundred years for the intermediate kings between Yudhishṭhira and Adhisīmakṛishṇa and arrives at (850+100=) 950 B.C. as the date of Bhārata war.

3. The date of Bhārata-war proposed by Pargiter, as Pusalker notices,[22] is contradicted by the Epic-Purāṇic account, which enjoins that there elapsed a period of 1,015 years between the birth of Parīkshit and coronation of Mahāpadmananda.[23] By this scheme of Chronology. Pusalker proceeds to fix the date of Bhārata-war in (1,015+382 =) 1397 B.C. Pusalker further argues that, although the number of kings mentioned in the Purāṇas during this period does not appear to be correct, as it gives an abnormally high average regnal period per generation, the figure mentioning the period (Viz. 1,015) seems to represent a fairly reliable tradition, especially as the date it gives for the Bhārata-war (c. 1400 B.C.) is corroborated by the Vaṁśāvalī list of teachers. The noted scholar finally concludes that the event (Viz. Bhārata-war) must have taken place between 1400 B.C. and 1000 B.C.

4. Pusalker draws our attention to the date of Great Flood recorded in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa and Purāṇa accounts. It has been shown that the devastating flood proved to be an important landmark in the history of ancient world. The date suggested for the flood in Mesopotamia is circa 3100 B.C.[24] According to Pusalker the flood of India probably occurred at the same time, and the date 3102 B.C. supposed to be the beginning of the Kali era, therefore, commemorates this event.

5. According to Pusalker, the year 3102 B.C. represents the age of Manu, the first traditional king of India. It has been shown that, since we have to deal with very long genealogies extending over 90 generations, we would be earring on the side of caution if we assume 18 years as the average reign.[25] Under this scheme attempt has been made to show that, (a) Yayāti (who also figures in the Ṛigveda) has been described in the Purāṇic account as fifth in descent from Manu. Thus, he flourished (18x5=) 90 years after Manu of in (3100-90=) 3010 B.C., (b) Māndhātṛi, the illustrious king of Ayodhyā described in the Purāṇa-

passages, coming after twenty generations, has been placed in (3100-20x18=) 2740 B.C., (c) The period of Harishchandra, another important ruler of Ayodhyā figuring in the Purāṇic passages has been put between (3100-31x18=) 2542 B.C. and (3100-33x18=) 2506 B.C. or roughly between 2550 and 2500 B.C., (d) King Sagara of Ayodhyā figuring as a great conqueror in the Purāṇa texts is stated to have flourished between (3100-41x18=) 2362 B.C. and (3100-44x18=) 2308 B.C., (e) Rāmachandra, the noblest ruler of Ayodhyā described in a number of Purāṇa-passages is suggested to have flourished 65 generations after Manu, i.e., (3100-65x18=) 1930 B.C. or roughly in 1950 B.C. Pusalker also observes that the aforementioned dates may not be taken as final and can be lowered by 400 years if the Bhārata war is placed in circa 1000 B.C.[26]

The above analysis makes it evident that the accumulated fund of passages in the Purāṇa texts belongs to a period as early as the Vedic age. The said passages may be taken in the sense of archaic elements of the Purāṇa texts, which remained unadulterated even in face of pronounced bias of sectarian pressure of the subsequent ages. It is due to such archaic elements of the Purāṇa material that the noted Purāṇic scholar V.S. Agarwal treated the Purāṇas as co-extensive with the Vedas.[27] Probably B.C. Majumdar's contention points to the real state of affairs, when he says that, (1) Purāṇa as a branch of sacred literature did exist in Vedic days, (b) it was recognised as the fifth Veda while the Atharvaveda was recognised as the fourth division of the Veda, (c) for each Vedic school a separate Purāṇa was recognised, (d) the extant Purāṇas differ radically from the Vedic Purāṇas and these texts received only a little additional matter by way of accretion from fifth century onwards.[28] Majumdar's thesis may appear fantastic in most of its aspects. However, it is in tune with the observations of other scholars who are inclined to place the archaic material of the Purāṇas in the Vedic period.

From the above notes and observations, it follows that Purāṇa-material about Ayodhyā and the related traditional kings is of much value. The fact is too well known that the Purāṇa texts were subjected to omissions and commissions in later times. However, it is not difficult to sort out such passages from these texts, which smack of a period of hoary antiquity. As shown above scholars have suggested different date brackets for these passages, though their views converge on the point of general antiquity of the passages under reference. The Purāṇic account does not fail to bring out that although Ayodhyā lost its early significance as a renounced centre of political power in the so-called historical period of Indian history, yet it is difficult to deny that it was a powerful kingdom during the rule of its traditional rulers beginning with Māndhātṛi down to the period of Rāmachandra to whom goes the credit of Aryanization of entire Jambudvīpa including South India and Śrī Laṅkā. Taking a moderate stand we can roughly place the golden period of Ayodhaā's political supremacy during the period between 3rd millennium B.C. (age of Māndhātṛi) and 2nd millennium B.C. (age of Rāmachandra).

The Purāṇic account of the traditional kings of Ayodhyā is more or less faithfully preserved in classical Sanskrit literature. We may illustrate here a passage from the Pratimānāṭaka of Bhāsa, which gives a list of the Ikshvāku-kings of Ayodhyā. These kings are designated as "Ayodhyā-bharatāraḥ", i.e. rulers of Ayodhyā. The list starts with king Dilīpa. He is stated to have performed Viśvajit sacrifice requiring the best things of all kinds to be collected for it. He is also said to have kept burning the lamp of righteousness.[29] Next to Dilīpa king Raghu is mentioned. Of him it is stated in the text "this is, indeed, king Raghu, who when sleeping and being aroused from sleep, had the expressions - An auspicious day to you - addressed to him by several thousands of Brāhmaṇas.[30] Next to Raghu, king Aja comes in the list. It is narrated in the drama "this is indeed, king Aja, who cast off the responsibility of government through grief caused by the loss of his wife (i.e., Indumatī) and who had the effects of the quality of foulness washed on from him by his constant ablutions at the conclusions of the sacrices.[31] Next name in the list of the Ikshavāku kings is that of Daśaratha. Earlier in the first act of the drama, Daśratha is introduced to us in eulogistic words. He has been addressed as Mahārāja. It is stated that he was considered to be a Mahāratha who was never repulsed in the battles of gods and demons.[32] However, in the 3rd act of the drama, Daśaratha is introduced rather in a contemptous tone. We are told that Daśsratha gave up his life and kingdom for the dowry of his wife.[33] In the drama under reference, Rāma has been described as the last ruler of Ayodhyā in the Ikshvāku dynasty, who destroyed Rāvaṇa, of mighty strength and valour.[34]

The question of date of Bhāsa the celebrated author of Pratimānāṭaka, has been a matter of prolonged controversy. According to M.A. Mehandale, Bhāsa can be placed in the second or third century B.C.[35] Winternitz places the age of Bhāsa at the end of the thrid century or the first half of the fourth century A.D.[36] Deeper analysis of the subject has been made by V.R.R. Dikshitar and A.D. Pusalker. On linguisitc and historical grounds the former scholar makes him a predecessor of Kauṭilya.[37] Pusalker, on the other hand, after making an intensive survey of the dramas of Bhāsa believes that Bhāsa was a senior contemporary of Kauṭilya.[38]

The description of Pratimānāṭaka regarding the Ayodhyā rulers of the Ikshvāku dynasty corresponds to the Purāṇic account in most of its essential aspects. Regarding variation, attention may be invited to the Viśvajit sacrifice mentioned both in the drama and the Purāṇic account. According to the narrative of the drama, it was performed by Dilīpa. As shown above in the Purāṇic account king Raghu has been given the credit of performing the Viśvajit sacrifice. Raghuvaṁśa also reveals that the sacrifice under reference was performed by Raghu,[39] though king Dilīpa is stated to have performed no less than ninety nine sacrifices.[40] Similarity between the account of the drama and the archaic account of the Purāṇas is brought out by the fact that in both of them the kings under reference are said to belong to the Ikshvāku dynasty.[41] According to the Purāṇic account Aja was married to the Vidarbha-princess Indumatī. As shown above, similar narrative regarding Aja is available in the drama, which also adds detachment of Aja from the responsibility of government caused by the loss of his wife. The Purāṇic account alludes to the marriage of Kaikeyī with Dasāratha. It also makes pointed reference to the fact that the said marriage was performed on the condition that the son born to Kaikeyī would succeed Daśaratha. This story is also available in the drama. The Purāṇic account refers to the valour and prowess of Daśaratha. The drama also refers to the heroic activities of Daśaratha and adds that he was never repulsed in the battles. The entire episode of Rāma in the Pratimānāṭaka breathes the atmosphere of expansion of Aryan culture and its deep penetration into peninsular India and the island of Śrī Laṅkā. As shown above, the Purāṇic account of Rāma leaves an identical impression. It is noteworthy that the Purāṇic list of kings of Ayodhyā is comparatively more comprehensive, in which no less than eighteen kings are enumerated. These kings are as under : (1) Māndhātṛi, (2) Purukutsa, (3) Trāsadasyu, (4) Trayyāruṇa, (5) Satyavrata-Triśaṅku, (6) Harishchandra, (7) Sagara, (8) Aṁsumat, (9) Bhagīratha, (10) Ambarīsha Nābhāga, (11) Ṛituparṇa, (12) Aśmaka, (13) Mūlaka (also called Nārīkavaca), (14) Dilīpa, (15) Raghu (the Ikshvāku dynasty of Ayodhyā came to be called Raghuvaṁśa in some Purāṇas, hereafter), (16) Aja, (17) Daśaratha and (18) Rāma. The list of Ayodhyā kings supplied by the Pratimānāṭaka is shorter. It includes the names of the following rulers : (1) Dilīpa, (2) Raghu, (3) Aja, (4) Daśaratha and (5) Rāma.

Thus, one can notice harmony in the midst of apparent discrepancies in the list of Purāṇic records and that of the Pratimānāṭaka. The list of the latter text is, however, shorter, but the order is neither distuned nor dislocated. It is also evident that during the age of Bhāsa (5th or 4th century B.C.); the glory of Ayodhyā and the achievement of its traditional kings had not faded from the memory of the masses.

The Purāṇic account of king's of Ayodhyā may also be compared with that of Raghuvaṁśa composed by Kālidāsa. The text describes Ayodhyā as the most powerful kingdom of North India from where king Raghu with his strong army reached the very eastern confines of India.[42] During the course of his Digvijaya, Raghu is said to have defeated the rulers of Bengal, Kaliṅga, the Pāṇdya rulers of Deccan. The armies of Raghu designed to conquer the entire western sea-board of India. Raghu is said to have proceeded further northward and reached the settlement of the Hūṇas on the banks of the oxus and its tributaries. After the Hūṇas those next encountered were the Kambojas. In the Rājataraṅgiṇī, Kalhaṇa places Kambojas to the north of Kashmir.[43] Thereafter Raghu moved further east, crossed the Himālayas and encountered the Kirātas in the valley of Brahmaputra. The next tribes whom Raghu met were the Kinnaras and Utsavasaṅketas. The former tribe is located by Jayachandra Vidyālankār in the upper valley of Sutlej.[44] About the identification of the Utsavasaṅketas, there is a controversy. On the authority of a commentary on the Raghuvaṁśa, Pargiter points out that the term under reference does not denote a tribe but a sociological expression implying a people who have no marriage and practise promiscuous intercourse. Utsava means affection and Saṅketa a gesture of invitation.[45] In this connection B.S. Upadhyaya points out that, a loose marriage form still exists in Kanaur and its neighbourhood. So they seem to refer to the Kinnaras themselves.[46] In case they were distinct tribe, they might be placed between the Kirātas and the Kinnaras. Next territories which experienced the terror of Raghu's arms were Prāgjyotiṣ and Kāmarūpa. According to Mark Collins, Kālidāsa treats the two as different kingdom.[47] B.S. Upadhyaya controverts this view and points out that reference is here to one single kindgom of Kāmarupa, possibly with its capital at Prāgjyotiṣa, the modern Gauhati.[48] It is noteworthy that in these campaigns Raghu is said to have played the part of a righteous conqueror.[49]

From the Raghuvaṁśa, it is also revealed that during the age of Kālidāsa the kingdom over which the Ikshvākus ruled was better known as Uttarakośala, with its capital at Ayodhyā. In the 13th canto of Raghuvaṁśa, Rāma is stated to have honoured th Sarayū river as the common mother (sāmānyadhātrī) of the Uttarakośalas who are familiar with the pleasure of moving on her lap of sandy banks, and who are nourished by the abundance of milk-like waters.[50] In the previous verse stress is laid on the performance of horse-sacrifice on the banks of Sarayū, and it is added that the river flows close to Ayodhyā which enjoys the rank of having been the capital of the kingdom. The English rendering of the verse may be repreoduced here as under, "which with the sacrificial posts enclosed on its banks propels her waters by the capital Ayodhyā the waters of which are made more holy (than before) by the Ikshvāku kings who entered into them for the sacred oblations necessary for the Aśvamedha sacrifice."[51] It is noteworthy that, in the Raghuvaṁśa, the two names Sāketa and Ayodhyā are synonymous and Mallinātha the celebrated commentator of the works of Kālidāsa ratifies this distinction.[52] It is, however, suggested that, since both names are found in the Buddhist literature points to a distinction.[53] Sāketa was one of the six great cities of Buddha's time.[54] Ayodhyā is met with but rarely. Sāketa occurs in the Saṁyuttanikāya, where it is located on the bank of the Ganges.[55] Raghuvaṁśa also refers to Nandigrāma, where Bharata is said to have resided during the exile of Rāma.[56] It is a suburb of Ayodhyā and is perhaps the same as Nundgaon, some twelve kms. to south of Fyzabad and close to Bharatakuṇḍa.

The above refernces of Raghuvaṁśa tend to show that Kālidāsa gives more details about Aydohyā and its rulers, most of which are not met with in the Pratimānāṭaka of Bhāsa. The order of Ayodhyā rulers of Ikshvāku Dynasty narrated in the Raghuvaṁśa is as under : (1) Dilīpa, (2) Raghu, (3) Aja, (4) Daśaratha, (5) Rāma. The list is the same as we find in the Purāṇic accounts. As in Purāṇas in the Raghuvaṁśa also the dynasty is named both as Ikshvāku and Raghuvaṁśa.[57] Thus the Purāṇa tradition regarding the kings of Ayodhyā survived through the ages and had its hold on the works of Kālidāsa. The date of Kālidāsa, like that of Bhāsa has been a matter of controversy. The scope of the present paper does not permit us to go into the details of the theories. The ealriest date assigned to our poet is Ist century B.C., the latest one being 5th century A.D. In a general way we can argue that most of the early Purāṇas had been composed by the age of Kālidāsa, and their authenticity had also been recognized. It is not improbable that, while composing his monumental poem Raghumvaṁśa, Kālidāsa had in his mind the Purāṇā-tradition regarding the kings of Ayodhyā and their military exploits.

A passage of Bhaviṣya Purāṇa[58] may be analysed for ascertaining the importance of Ayodhyā, as a powerful kingdom even in the so-called historical period. Scholars have often put to doubt the authenticity of Bhaviṣya Purāṇa for the purpose of history. Thus R.C. Hazra observes that, at least the major portion of the present Bhaviṣya does not present the earlier one known to and noticed by Matsya, Agni and Nāradīya Purāṇa. Thus according to the Nāradīya Purāṇa[59], the Bhaviṣya Purāṇa known to it consisted of 14,000 Ślokas. So, it was a much shorter work than our printed Bhaviṣya.[60] According to P.V. Kane, out of the four parvas viz. Brāhma, Madhyama, Pratisarga and Uttara, it is only the Brāhma parva that can claim an early date. The Pratisarga parva is a modern fabrication, containing stories and incidents of a much later period.[61] Hazra observes that, inspite of the fact that the Pratisarga parva is mentioned in Bhaviṣya, it is a new work. It narrates the stories about Adam, Noahs, Yākūta and others. It refers to Taimur Long, Nadir Shah, Kutubuddin, Babur, Humayun, Akbar, Aurangzed. It narrates the stories of Jayachandra and Pṛīthvirāja, preaches the glories of the worship of Satyanārayaṇa and coins myths about the births of Varāhmihira, Śaṅkaracharya, Rāmānuja, Nimbārka, Mādhva, Jayadeva, Visṇusvāmin, Bhaṭṭoji Dīkshita, Kṛiṣṇa-Caiṭanya, Kabīra, Meerā, Nānaka etc. It even knows the British rule in India and names of Calcutta and the Parliament.[62] In view of this, Hazra concludes that the contents of Bhaviṣya Purāṇa betray its late date.[63]

It, may, however, be pointed out that even in the fabricated account of the Pratisarga parva, it is not difficult to catch hold of archaic elements useful for the reconstruction of history. The kernel of the Pratisarga parva can be dated earlier than the passage of Nāradīya Purāṇa,[64] which knows of the said parva. It is narrated that the Pratisarga parva contained numerous legends. Hazra has dated the passage under reference between circa 875 and 1000 A.D.[65] It is not unlikely that a few passages preserved in the extant Pratisarga parva can be dated earlier than 9th century A.D. It is also noteworthy that the contents of Bhaviṣya Purāṇa are noticed in Matsya Purāṇa,[66] and Agni Purāṇa[67] respectively in chapters LIII and CCLXXII of these two texts. Matsya Purāṇa chapter LIII, according to Hazra, is assignable between circa 550 and 650 A.D.[68] while chapter CCLXXII of Agni Purāṇa has been dated by the same scholar in 9th century A.D.[69]

The passage of Bhaviṣya Purāṇa which we propose to discuss here occurs in the Pratisarga parva.[70] Probably, it is not much adulterated and has preserved past account to a satisfactory extent. Attention may here be invited to the "Bāhlīka" kings, which accroding to the Bhaviṣya account were thirteen in number.[71] These "Bāhlīka" kings are no other than the kings of Bactria, generally known as Indo-Greek kings, who penetrated into India during the period intervening between the Mauryan and Śuṅga rule. The history of these kings is mostly reconstructed with the help of numismatic evidence. However, allusion to these kings and their inroads in various Indian territories is also made in the Yuga Purāna section of Gārgī Saṁhitā. The fact that the Indo-Greek rulers are too well known to the Purāṇa tradition is evident from a Bhāgavata copy preserved in the Saraswati Bhavana library of Sampurnanada Sanskrit University, Varanasi. This manuscript had escaped the notice of the scholars for a long period of time, till it was traced out by Lakshmi Narain Tiwari, the Librarian of the Saraswati Bhavana. It is said to be the earliest genuine manuscript (No. 15459) of Śrīmad Bhāgavata dated V.S. 1181 (A.D. 1023-24).

The present copy of Bhāgavata also makes allusion to the existence of thirteen "Bāhlīka" kings. It makes specific reference to Demetrius (damitra) and Menander (pushpanidra).[72] The Bhaviṣya account narrates that being oppressed by the "Bāhlīka" kings who were thirteen in number, people including devas and pirtṛis approached Brahmā to seek protection. In this time of distress Pushyamitra, an incarnation of lord Hari was born. He is said to have increased the Ārya Vaṁśa. To his credit, he defeated the invaders and thus became an object of worship. The facṭ which is of utmost historical significance in the Bhaviṣya account is reference to Ayodhyā and its asscociation with Pushyamitra, who is said to have regenerated Ayodhyā along with Kāśi, Kāñchī and Avanti. It is noteworthy that other evidences at our disposal do not have any direct reference to the association of Ayodhyā with Pushyamitra. The oft-quoted Ayodhyā Stone inscription makes Dhanadeva, sixth in descent from Pushyamitra as lord of Kosala. Name Ayodhyā is not found in the said inscription. It has been argued that, the earliest reference to the Indo-Greek invasion in ancient Indian literature is the well-known illustration of Patañjali. The noted grammarian illustrates the use of imperfect tense to indicate an event not actually witnessed but still possible to have been seen by the same person. The illustration given by Patañjali may be reproduced here as under : Aruṇad Yavanaḥ sāketam, aruṇad Yavanaḥ mādhyamikām". Thus Patañjali understood the invasion of sāketa and madhyamikā as contemporary events. Patañjali gives an illustration explaining the use of present continuous tense. The illustration runs as under : "iha pushyamitramyājayāmaḥ". In view of this it is suggested that our grammarian was contemporary of Pushyamitra, and his generally accepted date is circa 150 B.C. The term sāketa in this illustration is specially noteworthy, and it evidently stands for Ayodhyā. Coming to the evidence of Yuga Purāna we notice that, the territories besieged by the Indo-Greeks include Sāketa, Pāñchāla, Mathurā and Pushpapura. Here also Sāketa stands for Ayodhyā.

From the above notes it is revealed that the past glory of Ayodhyā as a renowned centre of power was restored by Pushyamitra. It is not unlikely that, Ayodhyā enjoyed the rank of second capital of the empire built upon the ruins of the Mauryan empire. Possibly the Indo-Greek army was defeated by Pushyamitra at Ayodhyā where the brāhmaṇa ruler performed two horse sacrifices to commemorate two political events, viz., collapse of the Mauryan rule and the defeat of the Indo-Greek invaders. The Bhaviṣya account also reveals that Ayodhyā was considered to be a Vashṇavite centre, which proved to be a base of religious-political operations of Pushyamitra Śuṅga.

Another Purāṇa text which throws interesting light on the glory of Ayodhyā is Vishṇudharmottara. Hazra places this Purāṇa between 400-500 A.D., because of its non-Tāntric character and because of its frequent reference to the "prādurbhāva" and not "avatāra" which latter, he says, occurs in two places only.[73] This methodology of dating the present text has been found unconvincing. Thus, Kane points out that, whether the word "prādurbhāva" is used or "avatāra" is used matters little. In support of his contention, Kane cites the text of Narasiṁha Purāna which uses both words promiscuously. Śloka 1 of chapter XXXVI begins with the word "avatāra" (avatārāmaham vakshye), while Śloka 1 of chapter XXXIX employs the word "prādurbhāva" (ataḥ param Hareḥ puṇyam prādurbhāvam mahātmnaḥ). Such examples of employment of two words conveying the same sense are available in other various Purāṇa texts including Vishṇu (v.16) and Matsya (CCXLVII, 1, 19-21). It has been shown that, the only sure and earliest date is that the Vishṇudharamottara is mentioned by Alberuni, which does not carry the matter beyond 900-1000 A.D. Kane finally concludes that, the text of Vishṇudharmottara can not be placed earlier than 600 A.D. and not later than 1000 A.D.[74] In a general way we may suggest that, the text of Vishṇudharmottara was compiled sometime during the early medieval period of Indian history, and hence the information supplied by its passages regarding Ayodhyā is of cosnsiderable importance.

Kane has made a general survey of the Vishṇudharmottara account of Ayodhyā. The Purāṇa text mentions that the town of Ayodhyā was endowed with hundreds of parks. It celebrated and held gatherings of people. Its population was free from disease and had valiant men. It always resounded with the music of lutes, flutes and tabors. It had fair complexioned, charming hetaera cleaver in brilliant conversations. Its population was always gay. It resounded with recitation on the Veda and was endowed with the companies of brāhmaṇas. Its market rows were full of men that had applied scents on their bodies. There was not a man there who was wretched, dirty or emanciated. It streatched for three Yojanas on the bank of Sarayū and was ten yojanas in the middle. The earth there is marked with sacrificial posts and it is decorated with the abodes of gods. (i.e. temples).[75]

As a matter of fact, in the above passage of Vishṇudharmottara, there is depiction of an ideal kingdom which is properly governed by an able king. A graphic description of this kind of state, as noticed by Kane, is available in the Rāmāyaṇa. The lines of Rāmāyaṇa refer to an ideal country which is full of caityas and people who are well-placed. It is rendered charming by temples, prapās and tanks. Men and womem are joyful. It set off to advantage by merry gatherings and festivals. The entire land is well cultivated. It is full of cattle and free from injury. It does not depend on rains alone. It is free from wicked men and enjoys prosperity and happiness.[76]

In this connection B.C. Law has invited our attention to a passage of Rāmāyaṇa.[77] The said passage tallies with Vishṇudharmottara account with regards to the location and other details of Ayodhyā. Ayodhyā has been described here as bejng situated on the bank of Sarayū in the land of Kosala which was a big janapada, and the well-known town of Ayodhyā was included in it. Manu, the progenitor of man, is said to have built Ayodhyā which was 12 yojanas in extent and 3 yojanas in breadth. To an archaeologist like A. Ghosh these descriptions appear to be "highly unrealistic". Taking into account the passage of Rāmāyaṇa (1.5.7) which mentions that Ayodhyā was twelve yojanas in length and three yojanas in width he remarks that the extent of cities as given in literature is persistently exaggerated.[78] It is however to be noted that the value of Purāṇic account in particular and literary account in general can not be underestimated simply on the ground of exaggeration. In fact the archaeologists have been, in most cases unduly sceptical about the historical value of the Purāṇas. Much before Ghosh, Gordon had made contemptuous remarks about the literary evidence and stated that, the major portion of the Mahābhārata and the Purāṇas provides little except fuel for the blaze of controversy.[79] Another archaeologist has gone to the extent of finding the literary evidence of little value when not supported by archaeological data.[80] Wheeler speaks in similar tone and considers the exploration of literary evidence in support of archaeological data as a great risk.[81] As against the observations of the above scholars, Pusalker rightly comments that, the exclusion of literary evidence would mean restrication of culture only to the external manifestation of man's activities, ignoring the mental and moral make-up. The noted scholar proceeds to compare the Purāṇic accounts to those of Menotho about Egypt and of Berossos about Mesopotamia. One can not deny that, the Sumerian account contains inaccuracies. But, most of it has been confirmed by archaeological discoveries. On the other side when we come to the Purāṇic account, it has to be remembered that, the Purāṇa-tradition was preserved by the Sūtas whose versions were quoted to authenticate the Purāṇa passages in various contexts.[81A] If there are inaccuries in the Purāṇa texts, it is due to the process of Upabṛiṁhaṇa which was operative in almost all Purāṇas from the very beginning upto later times. According to V.S. Agrawal it was a sacred obligation of authorship to keep the text upto date by revising its contexts so often as necessary and the deliberate technique due to which the existing Purāṇic texts have gained in size and scope.[82] Similar is the observation of Dasharath Sharma who points out that discrepancies in the Purāṇas are more apparent than real.[83] Morever, as Pusalker points out that, in order to extract meaning from some passages one has to penetrate through the allegories, exaggerations symbolism etc.[84] In consonance with the observations of Pusalker and Dashrath Sharma, it may be pointed out that, exaggeration of description was one of the salient features of the Purāṇa texts. Much earlier, Winternitz had noticed how the Vedic account relates the stay of Urvaśī with Purūravā for a duration of four years and how in the Purāṇic account it is stated to have lasted for a period of sixty one thousand years.[85] This state of affairs should not surprise us for the simple reason that the Purāṇa authors had to satisfy the common mind. They had to popularize the age-old traditions in the changed circumstances of later times. Unless and until the past traditions were interwoven into legendary garb and unless they were kept far away from the element of reality, they could hardly find any response from the average class of people.

The Purāṇa-passages further reveal that Ayodhyā was considered to be a sacred place of pilgrimage during the early medieval period. In this connection Hazra points out that there were two stages by which Dharmaśāstra-material was added to the Purāṇas. In the first stage datable to 3rd-5th century A.D. only such topics as formed the subject-matter of early Smṛit-texts were incorporated, while the second stage datable to 600 A.D. onwards incorporated new topics including gifts, initiation, homa, pratiṣthā tīrthas, tith s, utsarga etc not found in Smṛitis or in Purāṇas written prior to the 6th century A.D.[86] In the present context, Kane points out that, although these new topics are different from the Vedic tradition, the Purāṇas do not ignore the Vedic tradition but try hard to build on the foundations of the Vedic tradition. In support of his thesis, Kane illustrates the passage of Brahma Purāṇa which heads the list of Purāṇas at least from the eleventh century A.D.[87]

Analysis of a passage of Matsya Purāṇa shows that visit to holy places had become a recognized institution of the Hindu Society. The said passage is available in chapter CXII of the text

70526

which has been placed by Hazra between 850-1250 A.D.[88] It has been said that the advantages accruing from a pilgrimage are not only equal to those resulting from a sacrifice but in some respects even transcend them. Sacrifices require numerous implements, collection of material, the cooperation of priests and the presence of wife and they could be performed only by royal personages or rich people. They could not be performed by poor men or by those who are without wives or without friends or who are otherwise helpless. The reward that a man gets by visiting a holy place could not be secured by performing such sacrifices as Agniṣṭoma in which large fees were paid to the priests; therefore visiting the holy places was considered superior to sacrifices. The said passage also occurs in the Vanaparva of Mahābhārata.[89]

Thus the epic-purāṇic account as shown above reveals that the early medieval period was an important landmark in the religious history of India, when sacrifices were going into disuse and Tīrthayātrā was gaining wide publicity. It is during this period that Ayodhyā which was once famous for being a centre of performance of sacrifices including Viśvajit, Aśvamedha, Atirātra, Rājasūya and Agniṣṭoma by the Ikshvāku kings turned to be holy place for Tīrthayātrā. Passages to this effect were incorporated into a number of Purāṇas among which the text of Skanda Purāṇa is of much value in the interest of the present note. One entire section of the text containing as many as ten chapters is devoted to the glorification of Ayodhyā. Scholars like Hazra and Kane have not suggested any particular date for the present section of Skanda Purāṇa. Hazra, however, concludes that "as to the upper limit of the present Skanda, it can be said that there seems to be little doubt in it which can be dated earlier than 700 A.D.[90] According to Kane, it would not be far from the truth to say that the Skanda can not be placed earlier than the 7th century A.D. and not later than 9th century A.D. on the evidence so far available.[91] In this connection H.P. Sastri has invited attention to a ms. of Skanda Purāṇa in the Nepal Durbar library written in characters, which belong to the seventh century A.D.91/A.

The text of Skanda Purāṇa describes Kosal as an important janapada of north India.[92] It is described as mahāpurī which is liked by lord Vishṇu,[93] and is famous for sacrificial observations. It is conducive to moksha.[94] It is narrated that Ayodhyā is loved by all persons, because of its being the permanent abode of lord Hari.[96] While Jāhnvī has sprung from the thumb of the right leg of lord Hari, Sarayū has sprung from the thumb of the left leg of the lord. Hence these two are treated as the holiest of the rivers. The text of Skanda Purāṇa places Ayodhyā at the confluence of Sarayū and Gharghara (i.e. modern Ghogra).[97] According to N.L. Dey the Sarayū is modern Ghaghra or Gogra. It rises in the Kumayun hills and is called Sarayū, Ghaghra or Devā (after its junction with Kālindī).[98] About the general look of Ayodhyā, it is stated, that the city is as beautiful as Amarāvatī. It consists of defence-walls, ramparts, streets and palaces, as well as lakes full of blossoming lotuses and temples resounding with Vedaghoṣa and sweet notes of music.[99] It extends for about a yojana beginning from Sahasradhārā in the east to the same distance in the west.[100] It is marked by the confluence of Sarayū and Ghaghara.[101] The south-eastern part of the sacred city is said to be resembling a fisth in form.[102] Explaining the etymolgy of the word Ayodhyā it is stated that the letters 'A', 'Ya' and 'Dha' forming the word under reference represent respectively Brahmā, Vishṇu and Rudra.[103] It was considered to be the abode of lord Hari.[104] It is added that, since it is difficult to conquer this city it is known as Ayodhyā.[105] It is placed on the sudarśana-chakra of Vishṇu and is conducive to religious merit.[106] Skanda Purāṇa also alludes to some minor tīrthas of Ayodhyā. About Chakra-Tīrtha, it is said to have been dug by lord Vishṇu with his Chakra.[107] Hence it is known as Chakra-Tīrtha. About Brahma-Tīrtha, it is narrated that the said Tīrtha was dug by Brahmā. Here, the pilgrim achieves the same religious merit which is accrued by the performance of Aśvameda.[108] About ṛiṇamocana-tīrtha it is said to be situated in the north-east direction of the waters of Sarayū. The pilgrim here is liberated from the ṛiṇas (Viz., devaṛiṇa, ṛiṣiṛiṇa and pitṛiṛiṇa).[109] To the east of ṛiṇamocana-tīrtha in Saryaū-waters is situated the Tīrtha called

Pāpamochana. Here, the pilgrim is liberated from all sins committed by him.[110] Still further in the east is situated the Sahasradhārā in Sarayū-waters. Here, Lakshamaṇa is said to have ended his life by Yoga in order to achieve his original Śesha-form under the instruction of Rāma.[111] To the east of Sahasradhārā is situated Svargadvāra-tīrtha, which is treated as doorway to liberation and is helpful in getting the Svarga.[112] There is reference to Sītākuṇḍa situated to the west of the confluence (of Sarayū and Ghaghrā). It is narrated that the said kuṇḍa was made by Sītā hereself.[113]

Other numerous holy spots of Ayodhyā mentioned in the Skanda Purāṇa are as under : (1) Chakrahari, situated on the bank of Sarayū towards west,[114] (2) Harismṛiti, situated on the bank of Sarayū towards west. It is said to be the abode of Vishṇu.[115] (3) Gopratāra, situated at the confluence of Sarayū and Ghaghra. It is narrated that Gopratāra in Ayodhya is as holy as Maṇikarṇikā in Vārāṇasī, Mahākāla-temple in Ujjayini and Chakravāpī in Naimishāraṇya.[116] (4) Kshīrodaka, the spot where king Daśaratha performed putreṣṭi on the advice of his family priest.[117] (5) Rukmiṇī-kuṇḍa, situated to the south of Kshīrodaka. It was made by Rukmiṇī, wife of Kṛishṇa.[118] (6) Dhanayaksha, so known after the name of a yaksha, who was deputed by Viswāmitra to protect the wealth of King Harishchandra. The Purāṇa adds that, one who bathes here gets a charming appearance.[119] (7) Vasisṭhakuṇḍa, situated to the north of Dhanayaksha-Tīrtha. It is said that sage Vasiṣṭha and his wife Arundhatī constantly reside here.[120] (8) Sagara-kuṇḍa situated to the west of Vasiṣṭhakuṇḍa,[121] (9) Yoginī-kuṇḍa, situated to the west of Sagarakuṇḍa, (10) Urvaśī-kuṇḍa, situated towards east of Yoginī-kuṇḍa. It is narrated that, one who bathes here gets the union of Urvaśī in the heaven.[122] (11) Ghoṣārka-kuṇḍa, situated towards east of Urvaśī-kuṇḍa. It is said that king Ghoṣa, who was born in the Solar dynasty was a devotee of arka, i.e. sun. The said kuṇḍa is called after his name.[123] (12) Rati-kuṇḍa, situated towards west of Ghoṣārka. It is said that the pilgrim who bathes here gets beautiful body.[124] (13) Kusumāyudha-kuṇḍa, situated towards west of Rati kuṇḍa. It is said that the pilgrim who bathes here gets the same body as that of the cupid.[125] (14) Mantreśvara, situated towards west of Kusumāyudha kuṇḍa. It is narrated that the Mantreśvara-liṅga was installed by Rāma himself. (15) Mahāratna, situated close to Mantreśvara it is said to be the best of the Tīrthas.[126] (16) Durbhara, situated in the nairitakoṇa of Mahāratna along with Mahābhara. The pilgrim is instructed to perform Śiva-worship after bathing in these two Tīrthas.[127] (17) Mahāvidyā and Siddhapīṭha, these two are said to be situated in the Īśāna-koṇa of Durbhara.[128] (18) Dugdheśvara, situated in the Kshīra-kuṇḍa. It is narrated that, on the instruction of Vasiṣṭha, Rāma worshipped the Śivaliṅga, which came to be known as Dugdheśvara.[129] (19) Sugrīva-Tīrtha, situated in the eastern direction. It is said to have been made by Sugrīva.[130] (20) Hanūmatkuṇḍa, it is said to be situated in the western direction.[131] (21) Gayākūpa, it is considered to be a fit spot for performing Śrāddha.[132] (22) Piśāchamochana-Tīrtha, it is said that one who bathes here is never born as Piśācha.[133] (23) Mānasa-Tīrtha, it is said to be situated close to the Piśāchamochana Tīrtha. It is narrated that, the pilgrim who bathes here gets all that he wishes.[134] (24) Hermitage of sage Māṇḍavya, it is said to be a holy forest from where the sacred river Tamasā has sprung.[135] (25) Hermitage of sage Gautama, situated to the east of hermitage of Māṇḍavya. At the same spot abodes of Chyavana and Parāśara are also situated. River Tamasā floats here.[136] (26) Bharata-kuṇḍa is said to be situated in the northern direction of Nandigrāma, where Bharata stayed during the exile of Rāma.[137] (27) Jaṭākuṇḍa, situated to the west of Bharata-kuṇḍa. Here Rāma took off his Jatā.[138] (28) Mattagajendra-sara, situated to the north of Jaṭākuṇḍa. It became known after the name of Mattagajendra, the hero who was engaged in the task of protecting Ayodhyā.[139] (29) Abode or Surasā, situated to the south of Mattagajendra-sara. It said that the pilgrim who worships Surasā gets all that he wishes.[140] (30) Abode of Piṇḍārak, situated to the west of the abode of Surasā. It is said that the pilgrim who bathes into the water of Sarayū and worships Piṇḍāraka is liberated from sins.[141] (31) Abode of Vighneśvara, situated to the west of the abode of Piṇḍāraka. It is said that the pilgrim who worships Vighneśvara gets his desires fulfilled.[142] (32) The Rāmajanmabhūmi, situated in the Īśanakoṇa, to the east of Vigneśvara, north of Vasiṣṭha-kuṇḍa, and to the west of the abode of sage Lomaśa. It is narrated that the pilgrim who visits Rāmajanmabhūmi gets the religious merit equal to the performance of thousands of Rājasūya-sacrifice and Agniṣṭoma, which is performed every year.[143]

General Conclusion :

From what has been illustrated in the pages of the present note, it follows that the Purāṇa-passages on Ayodhyā have reference to three strata of compilation. Passages of the early stratum allude to archaic Ayodhyā and to its traditional kings including Māndhatṛi, Purukutsa, Trāsadasyu, Trayyāruṇa, Satyavrata Triśaṅku, Harischandra, Sagra, Aṁsumat, Bhagīratha, Ambarīsha-Nābhāga, Ṛituparṇa, Aśmaka, Mūlaka, Dilīpa, Aja, Daśaratha and Rāmchandra. Political achievements of these rulers added to the glory of Ayodhyā. Under these rulers, Ayodhyā proved to be the nerve-centre of political power. It is from Ayodhyā that the process of Aryanization sought forth to the farthest confines of the Indian sub-continent including peninsular India and Śrīlaṅkā. The kingdom of Ayodhyā under the competent rule of these kings also witnessed phenomenal progress of Vedic religion beyond limits and numerous types of sacrifices like Rajasūya, Viśvajit, Aśvamedha, Atirātra and Agniṣṭoma were performed on the bank of Sarayū. The period of this early or archaic stratum can roughly be fixed between 3rd and 2nd millennium B.C. It is quite difficult to be precise about the period of the middle stratum. However, we learn from the passages of Yugapurāṇa, Bhāgavata and also from a less adulterated passage of Bhavishya Purāṇa that the political integration of Ayodhyā, like some other capital cities of north India was threatened by the "Bāhlika" kings generally called Indo-Greek kings by the modern historians. In this context the Bhavishya Purāṇa has a clear reference to the role played by Pushyamitra (Śuṅga) in crushing these alien rulers and in restoring the past glory of Ayodhyā. Such passages breathe the atmoshphere of India of 2nd century B.C., which is the generally accepted date of Pushyamitra Śuṅga. Passages of the third stratum have their reference to the early medieval period of Indian history. By this time sacrifices had fallen into disuse, while Tīrthas were playing a dominant role in the religious history of India. At this stage, Ayodhyā which was once a renowned centre of sacrificial performance, came to be treated as one of the major Tīrthas of India. Political dominance gave vent to religious pre-eminence. Like other Tīrthas of India, Ayodhyā came to be regarded as a cluster of too many holy spots, each of which had its own traditional history and ritual significance conductive to the attainment of temporal prosperity and metaphysical bliss in various walks of earthly and spiritual aspects of life.

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BHAKTI IN PURĀṆA-TRADITION

One can hardly disagree with the statement that the Purāṇas are althogether encyclopaedia of information and therefore very useful in writing a history of Indian Culture and Civilization. But very often a sincere attempt at gathering historical elements from these texts remains futile or unproductive in the absence of authentic critical edition prepared on the basis of their numerous manuscripts. Kane has rightly pointed out that most of the editions of the Purāṇas are based either on a single manuscript or on a few manuscripts collected at random and are not critically edited.[1] Consequently many conclusions drawn from the current printed editions of the Purāṇas or from the manuscripts of Purāṇas, must be regarded as tentative and as likely to turn out to be wrong. There seems to be much of logic in the observation that the date of each section, nay, sometimes of each single verse must be determined separately, particularly when one wants to use the section or stanza for historical or comparative purposes. The Purāṇas constitute unique store-house of ancient Indian historical tradition, but these have been so much tampered with and inflated by additions intended to bolster up particular forms of worship and particular tenets that great caution is required before one can recognize them as genuine and reliable representatives for the general state of Indian society and beliefs. It may however be conceded that the Purāṇas hold the position of a special class of literature and may well be regarded as the focus of Veda and Loka. Even in the muddled passages of these texts one can discern, as V.S. Agarwala holds,[2] a reconciled presentation of the older tradition with the new institutional developments in society. Another observation requires serious consideration that the Purāṇas form a bridge between the old hieratic traditions and current popular folklore.[3] In the spirit of the present paper we may comment that, although the rites, ceremonies, usages and religious views on which most of the Purāṇas lay emphasis are different from Vedic tradtition, they do not ignore the Vedic tradition.

With these introductory remarks on the general format of the extant Purāṇas and their value for the reconstruction of history we now turn to the subject of our presentation. We may start with the Bhāgavata Purāṇa. Among the Purāṇa-texts, the Bhāgavata is considered to be the most important for the study of the Bhakit-cult. Thus repeating the verse of Bhāgavata on the origin of Bhakti in the Drāviḍa country almost verbatim a passage of the Padma Purāṇa speaks of the Bhāgavata as the highest among the Purāṇas.[4] It has been noticed that there was probably an early Bhāgavata from which chapters have been retained in the latter. It has been further shown that, it is most probably this work which is mentioned in the Visṇu Purāṇa, III. 6.22; the Kūrma Purāṇa 1.1.13 etc.[5] The extant text of the Bhāgavata was in all probability written in South India. Ray contends that the author of the Bhāgavata was a native of the Tamil country, and was quite familiar with and proud of his country, its holy places as also of the Tamil Alvars.[6] Pande thinks that, this location is based more on the supposed connection with Alvars and is presumptive rather than convincing.[7] However, the statement of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa that the cult of Bhakti first arose in the Drāviḍa country and thereafter subsequently reached Vṛindāvana (Mathura) where it got a fresh start and assumed fine form, can not be totally ignored in ascertaining the domicile of the author of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa.[8] It is not unlikely that the said passage of the Purāṇa reveals the role of the those Tamil saints, which gave a new impetus to South Indian Vaisṇavism and proved to be a powerful force in the regeneration of the orthodox tradition eclipsing the hold of the heterodox school in that region. It has rightly been pointed out that the greatest strong-hold of Vaisṇavism was the Tamil country where it flourished under the impetus of the Alvars upto eight century and then under another class of saints known as Ācāryas. While the Alvars represented the emotional side of the Tamilian Vaisṇavism, the Ācaryas who were their successors represented the intellectual or philosophical side.[8A] Scholars have proposed a number of dates with reference to the compilation of the Bhāgavata. The earliest date assingned to it is the 6th century A.D., while the 10th century A.D. is the latest one.[9] Elsewhere I have suggested that a few portions of the Bhāgavata especially those connected with Śrī Krishṇa-legend can not be dated earlier than the 9th century A.D.[10]

It may be admitted that the Bhāgavata Purāṇa has played an important role in the growth of Bhakti and in making it an essential part of Vaiṣṇavism. In fact, Vaiṣṇavism remains unexplained and ill-defined in the absence of its glittering edifice, the Bhakti. The Bhāgavata has proved to be an important or in certain cases the sole authority for all great Vaiṣṇava teachers like Vallabha and Chaitanya and their disciples. In case of any doubt the Bhāgavata was considered to be the supreme authority. In close consonance with the Bhāgavata proposition of Kṛiṣṇānugraha, Vallabha states that the highest goal is not mukti or liberation but rather eternal service of Kṛiṣṇa and participation in his sports in the celestial Vṛindāvana.[11] Thus, the idea of anugraha or divine grace was absolutely indigenous in nature. Barth is therefore fully justified in criticizing those scholars who attribute the introduction of the principle of bhakti to a plagiarism from Christianity.[12] The passages of the Bhāgavata reveal a kind of springtide of the Bhakti-cult, whose doors are open to all. It lays down that even a chāṇḍāla is purged of the impurity of his caste by firm devotion to God.[13] Portraying a dismal picture of society in the Kali Age, it says that devotion to God and not assent to dogma, is the essence of bhakti and is considered to be the most effective means of salvation in the Kali Age.[14] In another context, the Purāṇa enjoins that sincere faith and devotion alone can uplift to eternal communion with God. Even a Chāṇḍāla, possessed of sincere faith and devotion, is dearer to God than a Brāhmaṇa, sadly lacking in faith.[15] It also relates that, even a person of low birth is liberated from bondage, if he utters the name of God only once.[16] It is significant that the above idea was not an isolated phenomenon. It is reflected even in some non-Purāṇic treatises on Bhakti like the Nārada-bhakti-sūtra and the Śāṇḍilyasūtra composed at a later date. Nārada says, "Among the devotees of God, there is no distinction of birth, learning, appearance, family, wealth, religious observances, and the like, since they all belong to him. They are suffused with the spirit of God everywhere in and around them, They are filled with the presence of God.[17] Śāṇḍilya says, "All persons even down to the lowest born have equal right to follow the path of devotion; it has been taught by generations of authorities."[18] Svapneśvara, the author of a bhāṣya on Śāṇḍilya commenting on the above statement of Śāṇḍilya remarks that "just as non-violence or non-injury is the common duty of all, so is devotion to God."[18A] It has rightly been observed that the most distinguishing feature of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa is the exalted tone of bhakti or devotion which is displayed throughout the work. The fervent emotionalism which characterizes medieval Vaiṣṇavism has its origin in this really great work.[19] We may comment that the monotheistic Bhakti doctrine or mystic emotionalism was a sacred legacy of the tradition of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa. One of its glowing illustrations is the Chaitanya sect of Bengal which according to Dey originated from the tradition of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa and owed a great deal of its development to the mystic emotionalism.[20] This observation also tends to controvert the claim that, through sūfī mysticism, Vaiṣṇavism of Bengal has received indirect Christian influence and that especially in case of the followers of Kabir, direct Christian influence is an indisputable fact.[21] On the other hand there seems to be much substance in the remark that, it would be foolish to claim that some of the bright thought in India at the present time is to be found altogeter outside the noble elements of religious and ethical heritage of India.[22]

According to the observations of Kane, among the Purāṇas throwing light on the aspects of the Bhakti-cult, the Viṣṇu Purāṇa is as important as the Bhāgavata.[23] As shown above, the authority of the Bhāgavata for the Bhakti-cult has been recognized by such medieval teachers as Vallabha and Chaitanya and their disciples. But the said text is not quoted anywhere in his bhāṣya on the Brahmasūtra by Rāmānuja (born in Śaka 1049, 1127 A.D.). On the other hand, he quotes over hundred verses from the Viṣṇu Purāṇa. In the Vedārthasaṅgraha he states that, in the same way as the anuvāka or section on Nārāyaṇa among all Śruti texts serves to expound the special aspect of highest Brahma and that all the Purāṇas should be so interpreted as not to be in conflict with the Viṣṇu Purāṇa.[24] It would not be out of place to mention that the doctrine of bhakti pronounced by Rāmanuja was more or less based upon the Viṣṇu Purāṇa. According to this great medieval thinker, the religion of bhakti or devotion, and prapatti or submission, requires no priest, for offering of love does not need the sanction of the scripture, and the grace of God is not in the hand of any man. For one who is deep in devotion there is neither scripture nor rule. It has rightly been shown that Rāmanuja preaches equality in worship and proclaims that bhakti transcends all caste distinction.[25] The authority of the Viṣṇu Purāṇa on bhakti especially with reference to its definition has been acknowledged also by Svapneśvara in his commentary on the Śāṇḍilyasūtra. According to his interpretation the highest form of bhakti is affection fixed on God. In order to substantiate his interpretation Svapneśvara brings into relief a verse of the Viṣṇu Purāṇa in the narrative of Prahlāda[26] and explains bhakti as a particular state of mind having the Supreme Lord as its object.[27] In fact, the conception of bhakti in the Viṣṇu Purāṇa has its roots in the Upaniṣadic tradition. Thus the Kaṭhopaniṣad and the Svetāsvatara upaniṣad lay down that a man who is free willing any thing and free from grief sees the greatness of Self through prasāda or favour of Creator.[28] As far the Viṣṇu Purāṇa, the above idea is relfected in the narrative of Prahlāda. The Adorable one tells Prahlāda that the latter would attain the highest bliss due to the prasāda or favour of the former.[29] Attention may also be drawn to the section of Viṣṇu Purāṇa, which describes the full swing of Kali (Kalivṛiddhi) bringing about the disintegration of Varṇāśrama order due to the advent of the alien nomads and the proselytizing activities of heterodox schools. As Hazra notices this situation led to the emergence of the so called Paurāṇic dharma or the composite religion of which the religion of bhakti was an integral part. The Purāṇa lays down that the reward which a man obtains in Kṛita yuga by abstract meditation, in Tretā by sacrifice, in Dvāpara by adoration, that result is achieved in Kaliyuga merely by reciting the name of Keśava.[30] Thus the impact of the Viṣṇu Purāṇa on the essential aspects of Bhakti, which gained greater momentum from early medieval period can hardly be denied.

As noted above bhakti was an essential ingredient of the Purāṇic (composite) dharma. Evidence of the Varāha Purāṇa, the original chapters of which are datable to circa 800 A.D.[31], reveals that the Bhakti-cult had made its mark on the social order of the early medieval period. Reproducing the statement of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa it lays down that, being remembered or talked of, or seen, a devotee of the Bhāgavat, even if he be a Chāṇḍāla purifies (the people) easily.[32] It also recommends that in religious ceremonies such as consecration of images, the Bhāgavatas should be given preference even over the Brāhmāṇas.[33] On the basis of these verses, it has rightly been contended that the influence of sectarian scriptures on the Purāṇic Brāhmaṇas seems to have liberalised, in certain cases their idea about the lower castes.[34] Besides, the Varāha Purāṇa is replete with the stories of Viṣṇu-bhaktas.The obvious motive underlying these stories is clearly the weaning over of women and Śūdras to the composite dharma of the Purāṇas and establishing social harmony. It is narrated that Nṛiga, who was Śūdra in his previous birth, became a king by virtue of the observance of Buddhadvādaśī vrata. Bhadrāśva and Kāntimatī, who served in the house of Vaiśya, attained royality by managing a lamp to burn in a Viṣṇu-temple.[35] Kuvera performed the Dhānya-vrata in his previous birth as Śūdra.[36]

The Purāṇa passages also reveal that the Bhakti-cult was not aimed at the negation of the traditional Varṇāśrama dharma. Thus the Kūrma Purāṇa says, "For men who observes the duties incumbent in the (four) stages of life Lord Maheśvara has to be worshipped through the discipline of Karma and Bhakti and not by any other means.[37] Among such duties Purāṇas also prescribe charity and philanthropy and as such the Purāṇāic conception of bhakti avers what is in advance of modern socialistic doctrines putting forward social service and removal of sufferings and distress as the highest dharma. Thus the Skanda Purāṇa enjoins that adversities of those good men in whose heart doing good to others is awake vanish and prosperity comes to them at every step.[38] Similar idea is expressed in the Brahma Purāṇā,[39] and even in early Purāṇas like Viṣṇu,[40] Mārkaṇḍeya[41] and Bhāgavata.[42] It appears that the attempt of the Purāṇic brahmaṇas was to revitalize the age-old Varṇāśrama dharma in the new setup created by socio-religious upheavals and economic exploitation. The challenge to the orthodox devotees of Vaiṣṇavism was not so much from outside as from within in the shape of what is termed as popular Vaiṣṇavism current among the common people, who had become regardless of the Brahmanical rules of castes and stages and imbibed Tāntric practices. The Purāṇic Brāhmaṇas responded to this challenge without showing any apparent sign of the break of the present with the past and advocating the purpose of Purāṇa-composition so far unknown to the Purāṇa-tradition. Evidence to this effect is supplied by the Devībhāgavata Purāṇa which lays down that women, Śūdras and the mean twice-born (dvija-bandhu) are not entitled to hear the Vedas, it is only for them that the Purāṇas have been written. This idea seems to have gained wide publicity and passges in its consonance were added in some early Purāṇas including Mārkaṇḍeya, Vāyu, Brahmāṇḍa and Viṣṇu.

To conclude, it may be said that the Purāṇic concept of bhakti was aimed at the creation of a commodious atmoshphere for social harmony and re-adjustment of Varṇāśrama dharma without negating its original motive. The Purāṇa-passages tend to show that the conception of fatherhood of God and of bhakti were indigenous to India and in no way they received any kind of impetus owing to the beliefs of Christian communities upon the Bhāgavata reformers. It is also evident that the monotheistic bhakti doctrine or mystic emotionalism was a sacred legacy of the Purāṇa-tradition and as such the theory, that, it was due to the influence of Islamic mysticism or Sufism does not correspond to the actual state of affairs.

Notes and Reference :

1. Kane, P.V., History of Dharmaśāstra, Vol. V, pt, II, 838.
2. Agrawal, V.S., Matsya Purāṇa - A Study, VII.
3. Pande, Susmita, Birth of Bhakti in the Indian Religions and Art, 143.
4. Padma Purāṇa, VI. 189.
5. Hazra has drawn this conclusion on the basis of the Matsya Purāṇa, LIII. 20-21, which runs as 'Yatrādhikṛitya gāyatrīm varṇyate dharmavistaraḥ/ Vṛitrāsuravadhopetam tadbhāgavatamucyate/sārasvatasya kalpasya madhye yesyurnarottamāḥ/tadvṛittāntodbhavam loke tadbhagavatamucyate/. Thus reference is here to Sārasvatakalpa, whereas the present Bhāgavata has reference to Brahmakalpa. II. 8.28.
6. Indian Historical Quarterly, VIII (I) 1932, 49-53.
7. Pande, Susmita op. cit. 143.
8. Utpannā drāviḍe sā'ham vṛindāvanam prāpya navineva surupiṇī, I. 1. 48-50.

8A. Sircar, D.C. Age of Imperial Kanauja, 312.

9. Hazra, New Indian Antiquary, I, 522-528; J.N. Banerjea, Indian Historical Quarterly, XVVI, 138-143, C.V. Vaidya, Journal of Bombay Branch of Royal Asiatic Society.
10. Hisrorical and Cultural Studies in the Purāṇās, 240.
11. Radhakrishnan, Indian Philosphy, Vol. II, 760.
12. Barth, Religions of India, 219 ff.
13. Bhāgavata Purāṇa, IX. 14, 21.
14. Ibid, XII, 3.52.
15. Ibid, III, 33.7.
16. Ibid, V. 1.35.
17. Nāradabhaktisūtra, 70, 72, 73.

18. Śāṇḍilyasūtra, 78.

19. Majumdar, R.C., Evolution of Religio-Philosophical Culture of India in the Cultural Heritage of India, Vol. IV. 53.

20. De, S.K., Pre-Chaitanya Vaiṣṇavism in Bengal. Indian Historical Quarterly, VII. 643-648, X. 301-320; IX, 98-102.

21. Estborn, S. The Religion of Tagore, p. 20.

22. Abraham, Rev. C.E., 'The rise and growth of Christianity' in the Cultural Heritage of India, Vol. IV, 569-570.

23. Kane, op. cit. 909 holds that the present Viṣṇu Purāṇa was composed between 300 to 500 A.D. According to Pargiter, from its account of Buddhism and Jainism it appears to have been composed after Brahmanism had recovered its supremacy, so that it can not be earlier than about the fifth century A.D. (Ancient Indian Historical Tradition, p. 80), C.V. Vaidya, Journal of Bombay Branch of Royal Asiatic Society, 1925, pp. 155 ff. places it around 9th century A.D. I have shown that some of its chapters especially those on the Māyāmoha legend can be dated even subsequent to 9th century a.D. Paurāṇic Dharma Evam Samāja, p. 256.

24. Yathā Sarvāsu śrutishu kevalaparabrahmasvarupavi-śeṣapradarsanāya pravṛitto nārāyaṇānuvā-kastathedam Vaiṣṇavam purāṇam . . . parabrahmasvarūpaviśeṣapradarśanayaiva pravṛittam, anyāni, Vedārthasaṅgraha, para 110-111, 141-142.

25. Radhakrishnan, op. cit., p. 709.

26. Viṣṇu Purāṇa, I. 20. 19

27. iha tu parmeśvaravishayakāntaḥkāraṇavṛittiviśeṣa eva bhaktiḥ.

28. tamakratuḥ paśyati vītaśoko dhātu prasādānnmahimān-amatmanaḥ, Kaṭha, II. 20; Śveta, III. 20.

29. Viṣṇu Purāṇa, I. 20.28.

30. Hazra, op. cit., 204, 207, 210; Viṣṇu Purāṇa, VI.1, VI. 2.145-16.

31. Hazra, op. cit., p. 105.

32. Varāha Purāṇa, 211.88.

33. Ibid, 1801-20, 183.25, 186-23 etc.

34. Ibid, 47.20 ff.

35. Ibid, 49.6 ff.

36. Ibid, 56.16.

37. Kūrma Purāṇa, 1.1.85.

38. Skanda Purāṇa, Kāśi Khaṇḍ 6.4-5, 7.
39. Brahma Purāṇa, 125.36-37.
40. Viṣṇu Purāṇa, III. 12, 45.
41. Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa, 15.57, 62.
42. Bhāgavata Purāṇa, VIII. 14.8.

MOUNTAIN MERU IN PURĀṆA-TRADITION

Amongst the various peaks contributing to the grandeur, glory and splendour of the Himālaya, Mount. Meru has made its distinct mark. It is traditionally called the abode of Brahmā. The noted geographer S.M. Ali[1] rightly contends that Meru is the pivot and key to the Purāṇic geography of the world. It is point of reference round which the mountain systems of the Purāṇic world are symmetrically arranged. The noted scholar takes us back to the Vedic evidences and points out that the Vedas do not mention Meru. However, he seems to modify his contention and quotes a passage from the later Vedic text Taittirīya Āraṇyaka, which refers to Mahāmeru or Great Merit.[2]

In addition to what has been stated by Ali, in the present context, we may cite the evidence of Nārada Purāṇa which explicitly mentions Mahāmeru and describes it to be the abode of Brahmā. The text narrates that the sages Sanaka, Sanatkumāra and Sanātana had a bath in the holy Gaṅgā before attending the assembly of Brahmā.[3]

In view of the above it may be contended that the Mahāmeru of Taittirīya Āraṇyaka is the same of Meru or Mahāmeru. However, the fact can not be denied that, it is of frequent occurrence in the Purāṇa-texts.

It may be noticed that the delusive charm, enchantment, fascinating and romantic spell of Mountain Meru remarkably figure not only in the accumulated fund of the ancient Indian texts but also in those of the non-Indian texts. The cosmographical account of the Persians, the Greeks, the Chinese and the Arabs recapulate and repeat the classical modality of

Meru. There is no doubt that there are variations in the details but the central idea does not differ. According to the tradition which gained publicity in China, the centre of the earth from south to north lay in the high and snow-covered Tsing-ling mountain, from which emerged chains of mountains, and which gave rise to a number of rivers.[4] It has been pointed out that Tsi-ling stands for Sumeru.[5] Coming to the tradition prevalent amongst the Jews, it is noticeable that they also made this mountain a part of their cosmographical system. According to their tradition Isaac adhering to the beliefs prevalent in his times introduced Lucifer boasting that he would exalt his throne above the stars of God and would sit on the mountain of Congregation 'on the side of the north.' Lucifer has been equated with Svarbhānu and Congregation with Sabhā in Sanskrit.[6] It has been pointed out that according to the Hindu tradition, Meru is also rendezvous of gods where the Sabhā or the assembly of gods is held on the northern side.

It may be mentioned that Sumeru has received not only a factual but even fanciful and fabulous treatment at the hands of ancient Indian writers. Thus, Kālidāsa calls it a mountain of gold.[7] Similar epithat is attributed to Meru in the Purāṇas like Vishṇu and Matsya. It is said to be the dwelling place of suprenatural beings like the Vidyādharas, Kinnaras, Aśvamukhyas and Kimpurushas.[8] According to Vishṇu Purāṇa the height of Meru is 84,000 yojanas and that of the ranges north and south of it (including Himavāna, Himavat etc.) is 2000 yojanas.[9] Apparently this may be taken as a case of flight of imagination since there is no mountain in the world which is 42 times the height of the Himavān or Himavat. In fact, the Purāṇa-author intends to convey the idea of the tremendous height of Meru, which appears to be higher than the highest mountain. As Ali observes, this is for the obvious reason that from the base one can not see the peak or top of the escarpment which dissolves in the misty haze above.[10] Reference may, here, be made to the Uttarakuru-Varṣa which is said to be situated on the northern side beyond the peak of the Meru.[11] Generally, it is contended that in the later literature the Uttarakurus are often described as mythical people. According to M.R. Singh the Uttarakuru-Varṣa of the Purāṇic description may be taken in the sense of EL DORADO. But the fact of matter is that the reference to Uttarakuru is not a fancied description of the Purāṇa-authors. There are a number of passages in the extant texts of the Purāṇas, which testify to the existence of an actual Uttarakuru region. In this context, we may refer to the texts of Matsya,[13] Vāyu,[14] Brahmāṇḍa[15] and Bhāgavata.[16] These texts bring out in clear terms the real existence of Meru though their description is not unoften covered by mythical garb or legendary lore.

Giving a symbolic description of the emergence of Meru as also its semantic implication, V.S. Agrawal refers to the Vedic doctrine of Hiranyagrabha Prajāpati.[17] Adhering to this Vedic doctrine, the text of Matsya Purāṇa relates that the material egg splits into eight portions which represent the constitution of the world of matter;

"bhūyo'ṣṭadhā vibhedāṇḍam viṣṇurvai lokajanmakṛt/
cakāra jagataścātra vibhāgam ca vibhāgakṛt//

(Matsya Purāṇa, 248.3)

The Purāṇa further relates that since the Golden Egg was floating in the Primaeval ocean its cavity was filled with a golden liquid which became frozen as the Golden mountain Sumeru;

"yadaṇḍamakarotpūrvam devo lokacikīrṣayā/
tatra salilam skannam so'bhavatakāñcano giriḥ"//

(Matsya Purāṇa, 248.5)

Coming to the central point of semantic implication or the meaning of Meru, Agrawal explains that the Golden Egg is the life-principle of motherhood. It fills the inner sheath of the Egg and becomes the solid substratum of the four-fold subsequent manifestation. In the language of the Purāṇas this is called Meru or the Golden Mountain which is the centre of the earth or the root-principle of Motherhood.[18]

Analysis of the different texts of the Purāṇas or sometimes even the different copies of the same Purāṇa texts tends to indicate that the name of Meru can not be taken in the sense of an isolated peak. To quote Ali, it does not appear to be a single mountain or an individual range.[19] It may be described as a fairly extensive plateau or table-land, a stretch of high, flat land which is encompassed by an unbreaking chain as peaks. At one place the text of Vāyu Purāṇa[20] compares its summit to a saucer and observes that its circumference must be thrice its diameter; "vistārāttriguṇasyasya pariṇāḥ samantataḥ" In case its summit is comparable to a saucer it would mean that it is depressed in the centre and elevated along the margins. Wilson rightly thinks that regarding the shape of Meru, there seems to be some uncertainty amongst the Purāṇa authors. Thus, the text of Vishṇu Purāṇa describes that this mountain is like the seed-cup of the lotus of the earth. " bhūpadmasyasya śaileśo'sau karṇikārasaṁsthitaḥ" (II. 2.10). According to this description, the shape of Meru is that of an inverted cone, and by the comparison to a seed-cup its form should be circular. The Padma Purāṇa compares its form to a bell-shape flower of Dhaturā. The Vāyu Purāṇa represents it as having four sides of different colours, namely; white on the east, yellow on the south, black on the west and red on the north. The text notices also various opinions of the outline of the mountain, which according to Atri, had a hundred angles; to Bhṛgu, a thousand; Sāvarṇi calls it octangular; Bhāguri quadrangular; and Varṣyāṇī says it has a thousand angles; Gālava makes it saucer-shaped; Garga, twisted like a braided hair and others maintain that it is circular.[21]

Elaborating this point in his own way Ali draws our attention to a very legitimate hypothesis. According to him, the assertion that Meru is circular, square, octagonal or thousand sided implies that the observes must have travelled round Meru and taken different routes - all close to the escarpment. Those who changed their bearings four times to circumnavigate the Meru, naturally described it as square in shape while those who changed them frequently naturally described it as manysided as the number of times they had to change their general direction of movement.[22]

In view of this situation the most comfortable way of summarily describing the circumference of Meru is, therefore, what Vishṇu Purāṇa says i.e.; it is circular. This would imply, as Ali puts it, one can make a complete round of Meru and come back to his starting point.

As far location of Meru is concerned, it is a problem which has been exercising the minds of the cosmographers, geographers and indologists eversince the beginning of researches in the concerned area. We may start with the evidence of Matsya Purāṇa. The text describes that Mountain Meru is bounded on the north by Uttarakuru, on the south by Bhāratavarṣa, on the west by Ketumāla and on the east (again) by Bhāratavarṣa.[23] Almost an identical description is available in the text of Padma Purāṇa, which states that Gaṅgā takes its rise from Sumeru parvata and flows to the ocean through Bhāratavarṣa.[24] In this connection B.S. Upadhyaya points to the possibility of identification of Meru with the Kedāranāth mountain in Garhwal, which is traditionally known as the original Sumeru.[25] Making a survey of all local traditions and evaluating them in an appropriate channel Sherring attempts to fix the Mountain Meru direct to the north of the Almora district.[26] Among the early scholars working on ancient Indian geography, mention can especially be of Nando Lal Dey. Part 1 of his monumental work entitled "Geography of Ancient and Medieval India" published as early as 1927 giving an account of ancient geographical names with a vast amount of literary documentation covers no less than 266 pages. He draws our attention to a passage occurring in the Bhīshmaparva of Mahābhārata, which gives the name Meru to a mountain in Śakadvīpa.[27] Dey is inclined to equate Meru with Mount Meros of Arrian near Mount, Nysa described as Neshadha in the text of Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa. Neshadha is equated with the Hindukuśa mountain.

The question as to whether the above observation regarding the location of Mount. Meru points to the actual state of affairs or not has been considered by B.S. Upadhyaya. He does not seem to be in favour of this suggestion. Upadhyaya points out that such identification would place Sumeru or Meru somewhere in the pamirs. In support of his own observation Upadhyaya highlights the evidence of Kālidāśa. Poems of Kālidāsa reveal the possibility of location of Mountain Meru in the vicinity of the mountains Kailāśa and Gandhamāḍana.[29] It is narrated by the celebrated poet that after the performance of his marriage with Pārvatī, Śiva enjoyed his 'ānandamāsa', on the Meru,[30] Mandara,[31] Kailāśa,[32] and the Gandhamādana.[33] Upadhyaya points out that all of these are situated on or in the neighbourhood of Rudra Himālaya in Garhwal.[34]

Before giving finishing touch to our note, it may be admitted that, above we have given only a rough outline of the multitudinous asspects of Mountain Meru. In fact, the panorama of Mountain Meru which is revealed by the cumulative evidence of cosmographical data, geographical details and literary passages can not be projected in a few words or in a few lines or in a few paragraphs or in a few pages. It demands multiplex exercise and well-weighed moderate judgement without underestimating or overestimating the value of the evidence so far assessed by the analysts, traditionalists and observers. Actually speaking we can not make any dogmatic statement and can talk only in terms of possibility and probability in ascertaining the shape, size, encompassment of Mountain Meru.

Notes and References :

1. S.M. Ali, The Geography of the Purāṇas, New Delhi, 1983 (Reprint); p. 47.
2. Taittirīya Āraṇyaka, 1.7, 1.3.
3. Nārada Purāṇa, Chapter 2.
4. Fou-Kou-ki, quoted by S.M. Ali, op. cit. p. 47.

5. S.M. Ali, op. cit. p. 47
6. S.M. Ali, op. cit. p. 47.
7. Raghuvaṁśa, V. 30, Kumārasambhava, VI. 72.
8. Kumārasaṁbhava, I.7, 11, 14.
9. Vishṇu Purāṇa, Book II, Chapter 2.
10. S.M. Ali, op. cit. p. 49.
11. Vishṇu Purāṇa, Book II, Chapter 2.
12. M.R. Singh, Geographical Data in the early Purāṇa, Calcutta, 1972; He quotes Studies in Indian Antiquities and Padma Purāṇa I, p. 217.
13. Matsya Purāṇa, Chapter 13.
14. Vāya Purāṇa, Chapter 99.
15. Brahmāṇda Purāṇa, Book II, Chapter 19.
16. Bhāgavata, Book I, Chapter 16.
17. V.S. Agrawala, Matsya Purāṇa - A Study, Varanasi, 1963; Ṛigveda X. 121
18. V.S. Agrawala, Op, cit. pp. 309-310.
19. S.M. Ali, op. cit. p. 49
20. quoted by H.H. Wilson, English Translation of Vishṇu Purāṇa, Punthi Pustaka, Calcutta, p. 135, Fn. 2.
21. B.S. Upadhyaya, op. cit. pp. 6-7.
22. H.H. Wilson, op. cit., p. 135, Fn. 2.

    S.M. Ali, op. cit. p. 48
23. S.M. Ali, op. cit. p. 48.
24. Padma Purāṇa, chapter 113.
25. B.S. Upadhyaya, India In Kālidāsa, 1968, p. 6 see also Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal, XVIII, p. 161.
26. Sherring, Western Tibet, p. 40; B.S. Upadhyaya, op. cit. p. 6; A.D. Pusalker, Bhāsa - A Study, p. 348.
27. Nandolal Dey, Geography of Ancient and Medieval India, Chapter 11.
28. Mc. Crindle, Ancient India As Described by Megasthenes and Arrian, p. 180; Nandolal Dey op. cit. p. 197.
29. B.S. Upadhyaya, op. cit. p. 6.

30. Kumārasambhava, VIII. 22.
31. Ibid, VIII, 23, 59.
32. Ibid, VIII, 24.
33. Ibid, VIII, 28, 29, 75, 86.
34. B.S. Upadhyaya, op. cit., pp. 6-7.

PURĀṆA-TRADITION AND KĀLIDĀSA

In the present note we are analysing a passage of Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa,[1] which bears close correspondence to the works of Kālidāsa in regard to the style, ideas and phraseology adopted by the Purāṇa-author; and ascertaining the approximate period of the celebrated poet on its basis. Before doing so, it would be worthwhile to point out that the evidences of the Purāṇas in this context have proved to be quite meaningful, reference to which has been made by the early scholars, in respect of at least two Purāṇas, namely, the Vāmana Purāṇa and the Padma Purāṇa. As regards the former text, mention can be made of V. Raghavan, who has given a list of manuscripts of the text and has sorted out its references bearing influence of Kālidāsa.[2] In case of the Padma Purāṇa, it has been shown that the story of Śakuntalā narrated in it is very close to Abhijñān-Śākuntalam in all its essential forms. In this context, Winternitz[3] and H.D. Sharma[4] have attempted to establish that Kālidāsa is indebted to Padma Purāṇa. After giving cogent data and controverting the above observations other scholars like Śāradā Ranjan Ray[4A] and Baladeva Upadhyaya[5] contend that the text of the extant Padma Purāṇa dealing with the episode of Śakuntalā is indebted to the dramatist and not he to the Purāṇa. Considering the scope and limitation of the present note, we reserve our own hypothesis in this regard. In giving this brief prefatory note our sole object has been to project that Kālidāsa has left his impact on the development of Purāṇa tradition, which betrays the influence of the poet in the skill and dexterity of the plots and designing the narratives accordingly.

The passage of Brahmāṇda Purāṇa, which we propose to examine in this note with a view to parading the borrowed elements from the works of Kālidāsa in it occurs in the Jāmadagnya upakhyāna. Elsewhere, we have analysed the contents of this portion in a different context. We have highlighted the hypothesis that the text of Brahmāṇda Purāṇa was one with the early text of Vāyu Purāṇa and under sectarian (Vaishṇavite) pressure at a later stage the old text bearing the new title of Brahmāṇda Purāṇa came to the fore. The portion under reference was incorporated with the apparent motive of justifying the separate entity of the Purāṇa under this new title. We have also shown that the original form of the Jāmadagnya upākhyāna is preserved in the Mahābhārata, which appears to have been improved upon in the Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa by way of inserting additional and adulterated passages.

Some interesting terms, expressions and references available in this portion are of much value in ascertaining its period and its annexation to an early text of Purāṇa tradition for the sake of authenticity. Thus, the word sāmanta is employed in it in the sense of feudatory-chief, which points to the later phase of the Gupta period.[7] In connection with the Himālaya, the lord of mountains, it is described that he was looking like mahārājādhirāja. The term reminds us of the epithet of the Gupta overlords indicating their political superiority to the feudal chiefs, who were subordinate to them and bore an inferior title of mahārāja.[9] The word maṇḍaleśvara used in it is equally interesting. Here, it is used in the same sense as in the late Gupta records, in which it denotes feudatory circle of subordinate chiefs under the leadership of a feudal lord, who paid their allegiance to the overlord especially in times of war.[10]

The portion also breathes the religious atmosphere of the late Gupta period. There is reference to Rādhā, who has been described as the consort of Kṛishṇa.[11] It also narrates that Kṛishṇa granted boon to Jāmadagnya that the latter would be regarded as an incarnation of Kṛishṇa in the world. These religious elements can not be placed prior to the later phase of the Gupta period.

Our analysis, thus, tends to strengthen the view of Hazra that the separation of Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa from the original Vāyu-prokta Purāṇa took place some time around 400 A.D.

Coming to the main issue of our note, we may point out that in general treatment the style adopted by the compiler of this portion is as simple as can be expected in a Purāṇa-composition. But at a few places it has become terse and vigorous, though on the whole it is charmingly simple. This fact is specially true of the city constructed in the hermitage of the sage due to the prowess of the divine cow. Attention may be drawn to the very first verse of the passage, which runs as under; athāśramam tatsurarājasadma nikāśamāsīdbhṛgupuṅgavasya/ Vibhūtibhediarbhavanai-ranekairananyasādhyam surabhiprabhāsāt[13]// Without any doubt the verse conforms to the conditions prescribed for vaidarbhī rīti, which is characterized by mādhuryavyañjakairvarṇai racanā lalitātmikā/ avṛittiralpaviṛittirvā vaidarbhī rītiriṣyate[14]// It has been maintained by the Purāṇa-author throughout the description.

We should bear in mind that the compiler of the passage was first a purāṇakāra and then a kāvyakāra. When a Purāṇa-compiler is constrained to write poetry, he will naturally read and imitate other. In the present case, the Purāṇa-author seems to have drawn his poetic inspiration from some great poet, in all probability from Kālidāsa, who is known to have achieved remarkable success in the exposition of vaidarbhīrīti. He seems to be indebted to the great master of vaidarbhīrīti not only in the adoption of style but also in the expression of ideas and selection of phrases. Thus, in the Kumārasambhava, Kālidāsa describes how Brahmā proclaimed Himālaya as the lord of the mountains, when he saw that the latter was capable of producing all requisites of sacrifice, Yajñāṅgayonitvam avekṣya yasya sāram dharitrīdharaṇaksamañca/ prajāpatiḥ kalpitayajñabhāgam śailādhipatyam svayamanvatisṭhat[15]// In close conformity with this description, Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa also states that Himālaya was crowned king of the mountains by Brahmā in order to have a share in the sacrificial materials; aho'yam śailānāmādhipatye'bhiṣecitaḥ/ brahmaṇā yajñabhākcaiva sthāne sampratipāditaḥ[16]// While describing the penance of Pārvatī, who was desirous of getting Śīva as her husband, Kālidāsa states that she continued her penance on and on even in incessant rains and lay on unsheltered hillock; śilāśayām tāmaniketavāsinīm nirantarāntaravātavṛiṣṭṭṣu[16A]/ Brahmāṇda Purāṇa also relates that Jāmadagnya-rāma was staying in unsheltered sites during rainy days, while he was propitiating Śiva by his penances; aniketaḥ sa varṣāsu[17]/ In summers Pārvatī remained within four-fold blazing fires; śucau caturṇām jvalatām havirbhujām[18]/ Rāma also practised his penances surrounded by five-fold kindled fires in summers; grīṣme pañcāgnimadhyasthaścacāraivam tapaściram[19]/ In the month of pausha Pārvatī passed her nights plunged in waters; sahasyarātrirudavāsatatparā[20]/ Rama, too, had his abode in waters in the śiśira-season; śiśire jalasaṁsrayaḥ[21]/ Kālidasa describes that the sages flocked to see Pārvatī, who was observing severe penances and adds that seniority in age is not taken into account in respect of those who are advanced in religion; didṛikṣavastāmṛiṣayobhyupāgamanna dharma-vṛiddheṣu vayaḥ samīkṣyate[22]/ Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa relates that penance of Rāma had created curioustity in the hearts of the sages, and they approached there in order to see this ascetic even though they were far senior to him in knowledge and (religious) duties; jñānakarmavayovṛiddhā mahāntaḥ saṁśitavratāḥ/ didrikṣavaḥ samājagmuḥ kautūhala-samanvitāḥ[23]/

The portion of Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa also reveals the influence of Meghadūta on it. This can very well be noticed in the description of the hermitage converted into city by the prowess of the divine cow. About the multitude of palaces situated in the inner side of the city, it has been described that their hemispherical domes were touching the sky appearing white in the fullmoon; pūrṇenduśubhrābhraviṣaktaśṛiṅgaiḥ prāsā-dasaṅghaiḥ parivītamantaḥ[24]/ This description clearly shows that the Purāṇa-author was well acquainted with Uttaramegha, where we get almost an identical description to the effect that the domes of the palaces of alakā-city were touching the sky : abhraṁlihāgrāḥprāsādāḥ[25]/ The ladies of the āśrama-city are said to have been moving inconveniently on account of their heavy hips; śroṇībhārākramaṇakheda.[26] About the lady of the city to whom Yakṣa sends his message, it is said that her gait was slow an account of the weight of her hips : śroṇībhārādalasagamanā.[27]

The description of Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇā regarding the scene of the city roade on which the king of the Haihayas was passing and was being honoured by the city maidens who were seated in their mansions (tam prasthitam rājapathātsamantāt paurāṅganāścandana-vārisiktaiḥ/prasūnlājāprakarairajasrama - vīvṛiṣansaudhagatā suhṛiddyaiḥ//)[28] seems to be influenced by Raghuvaṁśa, which narrates how Aja (and Indumatī) got to the royal road strewn with fresh offering of flowers and decorated with ornamental arches as brilliant as rainbow and the heat thereof was kept off by the shade of banners and was being looked upon by the city maidens through the golden windows of their mansions (tāvatprakīrṇābhinavopacāramindrāyudhadyotitatoraṇāṅkam/ varaḥ sa badhvā saha rājamargam prāpa dhvajcchāyanivāritoṣṇam// tatastadālokanatatparāṇām saudheṣu cāmikarajālavatsu[29]/

The above comparison tends to show that the lines of the Brahmāṇḍa passage were composed in an age when the vaidarbhī rīti and its master had become much popular and narrators and eulogists were making conscious efforts to popularize their compositions taking incentive from Kumārasaṁbhava, Meghadūta and Raghuvaṁśa which are the most important representative works of the vaidarbhīrīti. The crucial question as to whether we can ascertain the date of Kālidāsa on the basis of whatever we have presented in this note is yet to be ascertained. We can not give any absolute answer to this question. We can talk only in terms of tentativeness, possibility and approximation. As shown above the Purāṇa passage under reference appears to be an appendage in an early text and not its original part and presumably it can be dated around 400 A.D. On the other hand, comparative analysis of verses of the Purāṇa passage relating to the āśrama-tity noted abover shows that the composer is indebted to Kālidāsa not only in the exposition of ideas but also in the appropriation of phraseology, revealing some times even cases of verbatim reproductions. Our analysis, thus, enables us to take a moderate stand in support of the theory which places Kālidāsa in the pre-Gupta period.

Notes & References :

1. This paper is essentially based upon chapter eleven of my book "Historical & Cultural Studies in the Purāṇās". Here it is presented with a number of modifications and alterations relevant to the subject. The passage of Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇā covers as many as thirty-eight chapters (III. 21-58).
2. Purāṇa, Vol. IV, 184-192.
3. Winternitz, History of Indian Literature, p. 540.
4. H.D. Sharma, Padma Purāṇā and Kālidāsa, Calcutta, 1925 (Calcutta Oriental Series, No. 17).

4A. Introduction to Abhijñan - Śakuntalam with an original Sanskrit Commentary and Critical and Explanatory Notes by Śāradā Ranjan Ray, edited by Kumuḍ Ranjan Ray, Calcutta, 1939, pp. 49-50.

5. Baladeva Upadhyaya, Purāṇa-Vimarśa, pp. 540-541.
6. Historical & Cultural Studies in the Purāṇās, pp. 178 ff.
7. The Arthaśāstra of Kauṭilya is the earliest treatise which makes reference to Sāmanta. But its meaning, here, is different from its later sense of feudatory chief. It denotes independent neighbouring king. In the sense of feudatory chief the term occurs in later records. Thus the Barabar Hill Cave Inscription describes father of Anantavarman as sāmanta-cūḍāmaṇi (Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum, Vol. III, p. 223) and his date is placed around 500 A.D. In the Mandasor Stone Inscription, Yaśodharman (Circa A.D. 525-35) claims to have subjugated the sāmantas of Northern India (D.C. Sircar, Select Inscriptions, Vol. I, p. 213). One of the obligatory duties of the sāmantas during this period was to provide troops for the lord (R.S.

Sharma, Aspects of Political Ideas and Institutions in Ancient India, p. 212). In the Purāṇa-passage under reference, it is narrated that the king of the Haihayas was encircled by his sāmantas who were at the command of akṣauhiṇī armies for the help of their overlord (IH. 38.30).

8. Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇā, III. 22.58.
9. Beni Prasad, State in Ancient India, p. 290.
10. Originally the term maṇḍala signified a diplomatic circle of twelve kings in relation to a vijigīshu; (Beni Prasad, op. cit. p. 255). The point has been thoroughly discussed by B.N.S. Yadav in his work "Society And Culture in Northern India", pp. 136 ff.
11. Chapters 36 and 43 of the passage reveal that Rādhā was elevated to a higher position even than Krishṇa's which according to R.G. Bhandarkar (Vaishṇavism, Śaivism and other minor Religious Systems, p. 87) is a degrading phase of Vaishṇavism of later times).
12. R.C. Hazra, Purāṇic Records on Hindu Rites and Customes, p. 18.
13. Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa, II, 21.1.
14. Sāhitya Darpaṇa, IX. 2.
15. Kumāra Saṁbhava, 1.17.
16. Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa, III, 22, 48-49.
17. Ibid, III 22.7 ff.
18. Kumāra Saṁbhava, V. 26.
19. Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇā, III, 22.72.
20. Kumāra Saṁbhava, V. 26.
21. Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇā, III. 22.71.
22. Kumāra Saṁbhava, V. 16.
23. Brahmāṇḍa PUrāṇā, III. 23, 2-3.
24. Ibid, III, 27.57.
25. Uttaramegha, Verse 1.
26. Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇā III, 27. 25-26.
27. Uttaramegha, Verse 19.
28. Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇā, III. 27. 25-27.
29. Raghuvaṁśa, VII. 4, 5.

INTERPRETATION AND APPLICATION OF SAMUPABṚIMHAṆA IN PURĀṆA-TRADITION

According to V.S. Agrawal, the hundred-fold augmentation in the Purāṇic corpus was the outcome of upabṛiṁhaṇa, which has been zealously commended in the dictum itihāsapurāṇābhyām vedaṁ samupabṛimhyet. The noted scholar proceeds to argue that the problem of Purāṇa literature is not in the areas of chronology, for it should be clearly understood that in almost all the Purāṇas the process of upabṛiṁhaṇa was operative from the very beginning and upto later times. Explaining the objective of upabṛiṁhaṇa, Agrawala points out that it is pejorative to speak of it as interpolation. It was a sacred obligation of authorship to keep the text up to date by revising its contents as often as necessary. The expression upabṛiṁhaṇa was deliberate technique, consequent upon which the existing Purāṇas have gained in size and scope.[1] Throwing light on the process of upabṛiṁhaṇa though not explicitly, Kane observes that after the 9th century A.D. additional matter appears to have been unscrupulously inserted in several Purāṇas, the worst example of the kind being the third part of Bhavishya Purāṇa, which contains stories of Adam and Eve, Pṛithivirāja and Jaichandra, Taimur, Akbar, Caitanya, Bhaṭṭoji, Nadirshaha and so on.[2] In fact, it is largely due to the impact of the process of upabṛiṁhaṇa, that the purāṇas have turned to be encyclopaedia of information, and as V.R.R. Dikshitar holds, these texts are very useful in writing a history of Indian Culture and Civilization.[3] Similar is the observation of Hazra that the Purāṇas have not come down to us in their early forms, because tradition demanded that they should be re-edited with the changes in society so that their importance as works of authority. might not decrease. The work of re-editing could be done in three ways : viz., (i) by adding fresh chapters to the already existing ones, (ii) by substituting the latter by the former, and (iii) by writing new works bearing old titles. All these processes being equally practised with respect to the Purāṇās, some retained their earlier materials, some lost many of the earlier chapters which were replaced by other of later dates, and some became completely new works.[4]

Without deviating very much from the observations of the above scholars it may be pointed out that, (1) the process of upabṛiṁhaṇa was a prescribed ideal for Purāṇa-composition, which has opened the door of the Purāṇa-texts, for inserting new matters corresponding to the changes in the socio-religious framework of the Hindu society; (2) In the application of upabṛiṁhaṇa the Purāṇa-compilers did not follow any rational system with the result that very often in the act of re-editing the Purāṇa-texts moved far away from objectivity, (3) Discarding its original motive, the technique of upabṛiṁhaṇa was often abused in application, so that the incorporated passages speak more of the sectional bias, sectarian prejudices or meaningless speculations of the later compilers, and consequently in the passages of this kind it becomes hard to trace out historical information.

Below we are illustrating a Purāṇa-passage, which seems to have been inserted in the original text consequent upon the misapplication of the process of upabṛiṁhaṇa and fallacicous construction. It is a glowing example of the arbitrary retouching by some later compiler and commentator of the original text. The passage is taken from the dynastic account of the Purāṇa text on the history of the Mauryas. Regarding the lineage of the Mauryas, it has been pointed out that any passage relating to the Śūdra origin of the Mauryas does not occur in the Purāṇa-texts, the general purport of which is not intended to convey any reference to the noble or ignoble lineage from which these rulers hailed. It has also been shown that the original Purāṇic delineation concerned with the issue was subjected to misinterpretation in the commentaries of the Purāṇa-texts written at a much later date.[5] This suggestion does not admit of any valid objection. It brings into relief the most probable state of actual affairs as can be gleaned from the Purāṇa-text on the one hand and the Purāṇa-commentary on the other. There is, however, one serious consideration to which adequate attention has not been paid by the scholars so far. Right from the beginning of the studies in the dynastic account of the Purāṇas, no sincere effort has been made to explain the particular factor leading to textual disparity, explanatory inconsistency and contradictions between the early and late information emerging from the same school and converging on the same issue. The concerned Purāṇa-passage, as reconstructed by Pargiter supply the following readings regarding the Mauryas.[6]

> Candraguptam nṛipam rājye kauṭilyaḥ sthāpayiṣyati (Vāyu Purāṇa and Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa) kauṭilya eva candraguptam rājye' bhiṣekṣyati (Viṣṇu Purāṇa) sa eva caṇdraguptam vai dvijo rājye'bhiṣekṣyati (Bhāgavata Purāṇā).

The above reconstruction is not completely free from fallacy in view of the fact that it does not carry out the reading of a Viṣṇu Purāṇa copy appended with the well-known Purāṇa-Commentaries. It reads, "kauṭilya eva chandraguptamutpannam rajye' bhiṣekshyati". The commentary readings on the above line are as under :

1. candraguptamutapnnam nandasyaiva bhāryāyamjātam, (Citsukha)
2. candraguptam nandasyaiva patnyantarasya murāyām jātam mauryāṇām prathamam, (Śrīdhara)
3. candraguptam nandasyaiva patnyantarasya murāsanjñasya mauryāṇām prathamam (Ratnagarbha, noticed by R.K. Mookerjee in Chandragupta Maurya and His Times, p. 9)
4. candraguptam nandasyaiva śūdrāyām murāsañjnāyām jātam mauryāṇām prathamam (Viṣṇucitta)

It would be seen that all the above commentary lines are concerned with the metronomic description of Candragupta. While their general reference is to Murā being the mother of the first Maurya king, one of them goes a step further and refers to her Śudra caste. The question as to the invention of the Murā episode and Śudra origin of the Mauryas has been exercising the minds of the Indologists since long, and R.K. Mookerjee comes forward with the theory that the Purāṇa commentaries can not be held responsible for it. He makes pointed reference to the silence of the Purāṇa-commentators about the caste of Murā in the concerned passage and that there is no statement to the effect that she was a Śūdra-woman.[7] The correctness of this observation is open to doubts since it is based upon the single commentary, viz., that of Ratnagarbha. In fact, Murā has been described in them as a lawfully wedded queen of the Nanda king. She has also been described in them as the mother of Candragupta and Chandragupta founded the dynasty after the name of the his mother. The most noteworthy fact is that the cumulative effect of these commentaries suggests that the tradition relatiing to the Śūdra caste of the Mauryas was getting distinct publicity in the later writings.

If we consider the problem of consistency of these commentaries with the original Purāṇa-texts, it would be worthwhile to point out that in a number of cases due to the role of the later compilers or copyists or commentators, the original Purāṇa-passages could not remain intact or undisturbed at later stages. In the process of re-editing revisions were effected in the Purāṇa-passages with a view to making them adaptable to the current Socio-religious developments. Very often such revisions were also brought out due to the sectarian bias of the later compilers. The passage of Viṣṇu Purāṇa under reference is the most pertinent example of the latter category. In the entire sentence "Kauṭilya eva candraguptamutapannam rāijye' bhisekshyati", one can hardly justify the use of the term 'utpannam'. Evidently it is a case of later insertion. The possibility of its non-occurrence in the original text is shown by the consideration of the simple fact that in the entire sentence there is no such word employed in apādāna kāraka to which the word 'utpannam' can be related from the point of view of grammar.

Now, if the word 'utpannam' does not belong to the original form of the Viṣṇu Purāṇa passage, then the question is who could have inserted it and under which particular pressure this insertion was effected in the original text. Before projecting our answer, it may be pointed out that the texts of Candragupta tradition exhibit two trends corrsponding to the context and period of thier composition. The texts of the earlier periods have nothing in them to do with the origin of Chandragupta Maurya, while origin of disreputable nature, is ascribed to him in the texts of the later periods. Kauṭilya's Arthaśāstra, Purāṇa-texts and Mudrārākṣasa belong to the former category, while commentary on Mudrārākṣas and passage of the works like Bṛihatkathamañjarī and Kathāsaritsāgara are attributable to the latter one.[8] None of latter texts can be placed earlier than eleventh century A.D. This shows that about the beginning of the medieval period, when Buddhism had lost its popularity and possibly had fallen into disuse in major parts of India, contempt against it was being reflected in the current texts, especially in the brahmanical compositions. Since the most outstanding patron of Buddhism was born in this dynasty, contemptuous expressions with regard to it came to be employed in these texts as far as possible.

It may be further noted that while the inserted word 'utpannam' is hardly adjustable in the text of the Purāṇa, it is eminently consistent in the concerned Purāṇa commentaries written on the Purāṇa-passages at the later stages. Thus, the Śridharīya and Viṣṇucittīya make pointed reference to 'utpannam' and proceed to explain it as one, who was born of the lawfully wedded queen of Nanda, known as Murā. In this context, it may be noted that the Viṣṇucittīya explicitly refers to the Śudra-caste of Murā. From this, it naturally follows that the word 'utpannam' was deliberately inserted in the original passage by these commentators, who are placed in the beginning of the medieval period.[9] Their age, thus, falls in close proximity to the time of the authors in whose writings the fabricated Murā-episode finds its publicity, and which also aim at propogating the Śūdra-origin of the Mauryas in utter contradiction to the earlier and more authentic sources on the subject.

We may conclude our note whith the remark that the above Purāṇa-passage and many others of the kind are instances of misapplication of the age-old Purāṇa technique of samupabṛimhaṇa. As remarked earlier the said technique was initially aimed at the incorporation of the current socio-religious changes without negating the original form of the archaic tradition. Thus, it was a reconciled presentation of the older tradition with the new institutional development in the society. But the pressure of sectarian rivalry and sectional bias had such a dominant role in the early medieval and medieval period of Indian history, that the Purāṇa authors could not carry on the older integrity, and consequently in many respects the extant Purāṇa-passages do not reveal so much the historical developments of the times as they do reveal the cases of mishandling in these texts by the later compilers. Thus, without taking proper caution one can not regard the existing Purāṇa-texts as genuine and reliable representatives of the socio-religious developments of India's past.

Notes & References :

1. Agrawala, V.S., Matsya Purāṇa - A Study, Preface, III-IV.
2. Kane, P.V., History of Dharmaśāstra, Vol. V. pt. II p. 855.'
3. Poona Orientalist, II, pp. 77-83.
4. Hazra, R.C., Purāṇic Records, pp. 6-7.
5. Mookerjee, R.K., Chandragupta Maurya and his Times, pp. 9-10.
6. Pargiter, F.E., The Purāṇa-Texts of the Dynasties of the Kali Age, p. 28 and notes.
7. Mookerjee, R.K., op. cit., p. 10.
8. Ibid, pp. 8 ff.
9. Gode, P.K. in Annals of Bhandarkar Oriental Institute, pp. 179 ff; Baladeo Upadhyaya, Purāṇa-Vimarśa, p. 578.

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HISTORIOGRAPHICAL ANALYSIS OF SOME ĀKHYĀNAS IN PURĀṆA-TRADITION

There is a considerable amount of logic in the statement of Kane that literary works and society act and react on each other.[1] A few centuries before and after Christ the Indian society experienced the growing strength and onslaught of Buddhism, Jainism and other heterodox sects most of which were anti-Vedic or non-Vedic in nature. The period also witnessed the invasions or intrusion of the alien tribes including the Greeks, Śakas, Pahlavas, Hūṇas and others. This state of affairs gave much food for thought to those who were supposed to be the bearers of Vedic tradition and induced them to write works setting forth new ideologies and practices effecting a re-statement of ancient Vedic and Smṛiti religion. These works were destined to attain a position of authority and eminence. Under the pressure of the circumstances, the task of the followers of the Veda was to follow them and to adapt their practices and religious rites to the requirements of the Purāṇas. On one hand they were making efforts for undermining the power and prestige of Buddhism and Jainism and the influence of numerous philosophical schools, the number of which was no less than sixty-three according to Mahāvagga.[2] On the other hand they were also trying to wean away large sections of the masses from the magnetic aspects of Buddhism. They were also convincing the masses that the latter could get a better accommodation in the re-oriented Hindu faith.

In the present note we are attempting to re-examine the observation of Kane that some Purāṇas started by saying that the Bauddhas and Jainas were asuras and enemies of gods that were purposely deluded by god.[3] On the basis of the terms nagna, arhata and followers of ahiṁsā narrated in the account of māyāmohākhyāna of the Vishṇu Purāṇa-text, Wilson observes that the description alludes to the prevalence of Jain sect in the west of India in the eleventh, twelth centuries or even earlier and is a circumstance of the same weight in investing the date of Viṣṇu Purāṇa.[4] Hazra observes that the Vishṇu Purāṇa-form of māyāmohākhyāna is later than its counter-form available in the Matsya-text.[5] The merit of Hazra's conclusion can be tested in view of a consideration which has escaped his notice. In the Matsya Purāṇa the māyāmoha-ākhyāna concerns with the activities of the sons of king Raji. It is related that they had become very powerful, took possession of Indra's kingdom and deprived him of his share in the sacrifices. In order to avert this misfortune Indra sought the help of Bṛihaspati. The latter increased the power of the god by means of various rites. He also preached the sons of Raji the non-Vedic faith of Jina and thus deluded them. They began to follow non-Vedic tradition. Consequently, they lost their strength and were killed by Indra.[6] In this connection, Hazra points out that the māyamohākhyāna in the text of Matsya was borrowed in the texts of Harivaṁśa and Devībhāgavata in both of which Bṛihaspati is stated to have deluded the adversaries of gods.[7] The noted scholar has failed to notice that the aforementioned form of māyāmoha-ākhyāna also occurs in the text of Vishṇu Purāṇa.[8] In its essential aspects it is very much akin to its counter-form in Matsya Purāṇa. Relating the ākhyāna the text of Vishṇu Purāṇa alludes to the role of Bṛihaspati in misguiding Raji's sons. They became enemies of the brāhmaṇas, and began to hate the traditional Vedic faith. They were killed by Indra. Consequently, Indra got his place in heaven. Thus the text of Vishṇu Purāṇa has preserved in it two forms of the māyāmoha-ākhyāna. One of these depicts Bṛihaspati's role in deluding the adversaries of gods. The other one associates the act of delusion with Vishṇu. Obviously, the two versions point to two different periods of compilation. It is quite likely that some later compiler of Vishṇu Purāṇa without disturbing the consistency of the ākhyāna in its original form added in the text the new and Vaishṇavite form with a view to retaining the popularity of the early form. Hazra observes that Padma Purāṇa has in it the amalgamated form of the māyāmoha-ākhyāna occurring in the texts of Matsya and Vishṇu.[9] We may approach the actuality of circumstances from another angle. We have shown above that, the early form of the ākhyāna in the Vishṇu Purāṇa has not been taken into account by Hazra. It has to be investigated as to the particular circumstance which led to the formation of another version of the ākhyāna. It is quite likely that, it was framed under sectaian pressure. The association of the act of deluding the adversaries of gods with the supreme Vaishṇavite deily was a substitute of the act of its association with the divine priest. In the text of Vishṇu Purāṇa the chapters concerned with the Vaishṇavite version are more consistently arranged than Padma Purāṇa. It may be noted that consistent plan of Vishṇu Purāṇa was first pointed out by Pargiter. He also remarked that, it is a late work composed as a single whole. It is not a collection of materials of various times.[9A] This observation is hardly acceptable in its entirety. While there is a consistency in the chapters on māyāmoha-ākhyāna; the neighbouring chapters are adversely affected. They are subjected to omissions. Thus, the text was not compiled as a single whole. It is not a late work. We may now come to the original point. The arrangement of Padma Purāṇa's chapters relating to the māyāmoha-ākhyāna is most incongruous. The early and late forms are confused together in the same continuation. Consequent upon it, the Vaishṇavite version of the ākhyāna does not have independent status to make its appeal separate and dissociated from the early form. On the other hand, in the text of Vishṇu Purāṇa there is a considerable gap between the two versions of the same ākhyāna. These two are compiled in two different sections of the text. The plan which is followed in the text of Vishṇu Purāṇa leaves the impression that the Vaishṇvite form of the story has been adjusted into a new setting. Evidently, this was an attempt of a later period improved upon the clumsy arrangement of Padma Purāṇa. Evidence of the above supposition is more clearly brought out by chapter six of Vishṇu Purāṇa occurring in the same section. The verses of this chapter reveal the possibility of two facts. One is the sectarian blending in the original passages and other is indebtedness of Vishṇu Purāṇa to Padma Purāṇa for its chapters on māyāmoha-ākhyāna. The chapter is considered to have been compiled at a later stage, since it contains a list of eighteen Purāṇas. It is a testimony to an interference with the integrity of the text.[10] It may be specified here that the chapter has strong Vaishṇvite leaning which is clearly reflected in its verse twenty-six. It describes that, the account of the text contains the well-known five lakshaṇas alongwith other narratives and adds that these are all written in praise of god Vishṇu. This is a clear evidence of the conversion of the original passage into sectarian form. Despite later interference the consistency of the text has been maintained appreciably well. Thus the original verse mentioning the five characteristics of a Purāṇa occurs in it with an additional remark that the five lakshaṇas cover in general way all the Mahāpurāṇas as well as the Upa-Purāṇas. The concerned verse may be reproduced here as under :

> "mahāpurāṇānyetāni hyaṣṭādaśa mahāmune/ tathā copapurāṇāni munibhiḥ kathitani ca// sargaśca pratisargaśca vaṁśamanvantarāṇi ca/ sarveṣveteṣu kathyante vaṁśānucaritañca yat"//

For a clear reference the verse under discussion may also be reproduced here as under :

> "sarge ca pratisare ca vaṁsamanvantarādiṣu/
> kathyate bhagāvan visṇuraśeṣveva sattama"//

In between the two verses, there is an intervening verse, which demarcates the line of the arrangement of this chapter. The general description of the Purāṇa-literature ends at this juncture and the compiler proceeds to describe the specific features which are peculiar to Vishṇu Purāṇa. There is, thus, an identity of method followed in the arrangement of the early and late verses of this chapter on one hand and in that of the early and late chapters of the text as a whole on the other. There is, therefore, possibility of compilation of the late verses of the chapter and chapters on mayāmoha-ākhyana in the present section by one and the same hand. It is quite likely that these passages were compiled at a comparatively later period. The Padma Purāṇa which is mentioned twice in them formed the source of the Vaishṇavite form of māyāmoha-ākhyāna rearranged on a consistent plan in the text of Vishṇu Purāṇa. The relevant verse of Vishṇu Purāṇa which testifies to the above possibility reads :

"yadettava maitreya purāṇam kathyate mayā/
etad vaiṣnavasañjñam vai pādmasya samanantaram//"

Thus, the expression "pādmasya samanantaram" refers to the similarity of the texts of Vishṇu and Padma regarding the account of māyāmoha-ākhyāna. Wilson, however translates it as the Purāṇa having vaishṇava for its name described next after Padma Purāṇa.

Light on the present problem is also thrown by the text of Bhāgavata. Māyāmoha-ākhyāna occurs in it in a very concise form. It depicts the early form of the ākhyāna and is silent about Vaishṇvite form. The earlier form, too, is summed up into a few verses.[11] It is quite likely that the chapters of Vishṇu Purāṇa on the Vashṇavite form of the ākhyāna were added in the text later than the text of Bhāgavata. Like the text of Bhāgavta, the texts of Vāyu and Brahmāṇḍa, too, have preserved in them only the original form of the ākhyāna. It is related that the persons who forsake the stūdy of Veda through delusion (mohāt) are called nagna. These two texts also relate that such persons do not deserve invitation in śrāddha.[12] But for this simple reference, these two texts do not frame any narrative on its basis. Vishṇu Purāṇa also refers to such persons designated as nagna in its chapters on śrāddha before its passages on māyāmoha-ākhyāna. Non-occurrence of the māyāmoha-ākhyāna in Vāyu and Brahmāṇḍa shows that the chapters of Vishṇu under reference are later in date than its chapters on śrāddha. It is quite likely that, the chapters of Vishṇu Purāṇa on the ākhyāna were added in immediate succession of its chapters which only refer to the forsakers of the Vedic path called nagna but do not givę a detailed description. In simple style it is narrated that the pitṛis do not partake of the śrāddha meal in case it is looked upon by a nagna.[13] The texts of Vāyu and Brahmāṇda give the same description. But they also explain the term in the same continuation. On the other hand, the text of Vishṇu Purāṇa gives an identical meaning of the term. but, the verses related to it are removed from the śrāddha chapters and are added to the māyā-moha-ākhyāna. This anlaysis may reveal that, the arrangement of Vāyu and Brahmāṇḍa because of its identity in both the texts has the stamp of earliness in it. In case of Vishṇu Purāṇa we find that these verses serve the purpose of introduction of the account of the māyamoha-ākhyāna in all likelihood after transferring them from the original place of their occurrence. Thus, it is quite doubtful if the chapters of Vishṇu Purāṇā on māyāmoha-ākhyāna were present in the original form of the text.

Attention may be drawn here to an epigraphic evidence that in the brahmanical cult Buddha was accepted as an incarnation of Vishṇu. Thus there is a rock-cut temple in Mahaballipuram. There is a fragmentary stone inscription in the said temple. The inscription reads :

". . . . harasya (haraśca) narasiṁhaśca vāmanaḥ/
rāmo rāmasya (rāmaśca) buddho kalkī ca te daśa"//

Thus the inscription relates that Buddha was ninth incarnation of Vishṇu. This inscription is generally dated in the seventh century A.D. Among non-Purāṇic literary evidences mention may be made of daśāvatāra-mahākāvya of Kshemendra which relates that Buddha was ninth incarnation of Vishṇu. Evidence to this effect is also supplied by a temple at Sirpur in Madhya Pradesh in which an image of Buddha in meditative posture is placed by the side of the image of Rāma. This shows that by about ninth century A.D. Buddha incarnation of Vishṇu had gained wide publicity. In this connection a verse occurring in Agni Purāṇa seems to be of great use. It relates that son of Śuddhodana incarnated in the form of māyāmoha. He deluded the daityas, who neglected the Vedic religion. The verse reads :

"māyāmohasvarūpo'sau śuddhodanasuto' bhavat/
mohayādaityānstyājitā Vedadharmakam"// (XVI.2)

The same narrative is available in Bhavishya Purāṇa.[14]

A question naturally arises as to what was after all the motive of the Paurāṇikas in inventing the māyāmoha-ākhyāna. It may be mentioned that formation of this ākhyana passed through different stages. The basic and original form of the ākhyāna is free from sectarian touches. It relates mutual conflict between the sons of Raji and Indra. Indra seeks the help of the divine priest Bṛihaspati, who deludes them and also induces them to forsake the traditional Vedic religion. Consequently they grew weak and were overpowered by Indra. In course of time the non-sectarian form of the ākhyāna is coloured with Vaishṇavism, when god Vishṇu plays the role of deluding the demons. Till this stage there is no mention of Buddha in these texts. However, by about ninth century Buddha begins to figure in the ākhyāna. He is clearly stated to have been the māyāmoha incarnation of Vishṇu. The entire ākhyāna is thus motivated to assimilate Buddhism in the Paurāṇika or brahmanical religion.

We may conclude our note with the observation of Kane that the Purāṇas played a substantial role in bringing out the decline and disappearance of Buddhism by emphasizing and assimilating some of the principles and doctrines of Buddism such as ahiṁsā, by accepting Buddha himself as an avatāra of Vishṇu, by adopting vegetarianism as a high form of austerity, by making use of monasteries and asceticism as stated in such Smṛitis as those of Manu and Yāj.[15] Equally noteworthy is the contention that it was largely through the Paurānika literature that Hinduism secured its revival and the downfall of Buddhism.[16]

XX XX XX

We may now turn to another Paurāṇika ākhyāna which is generally termed as liṅgodbhava-ākhyāna. There is no doubt that the present ākhyāna has attracted the scholars and spate of publications on the subject has come to the fore. However the ākhyāna under reference has not been evaluated in correct historical perspective or in a commodious chronological order.

The ākhyāna narrates the story of the blazing pillar associated with liṅga. It is said to have born on the occasion when Brahmā and Vishṇu were quarrelling for superiority. Rao points out that the above ākhyāna is based on the Vedic narrative of skambha. It is stated to have shed forth gold in the midst of the universe. One of its functions is described as begetting prājāpati.[17] According to the narrative mentioned in the Vedas it is co-extensive with the universe and comprehends in him the various parts of the universe. Rao also observes that the Purāṇic account of appearance of Śiva in the form of blazing pillar appears to be an attempt of the later period to identify the Vedic skambha with the phallic emblem, which was originally an element of non-Aryan mode of worship. Banerjea examines the conclusion of Rao in correct perspective and remarks that, the orthodox section of the Hindus at first showed tardiness in giving sanction to this practice.[18] While analysing this ākhyāna intensively, N.M. Caudhary concludes that the phallic worship had a scope for evolution as an independent cult.[19] Yaduvansi points out that the way in which the ākhyāna narrates the emergence of phallus does not connect it with the organ of Śiva.[20]

Without deviating very much from the hypotheses of the above shcolars, it needs to be emphasized that the ākhyāna is not uniformly narrated in the Purāṇa-texts. Their variations throw an interesting light on the simple as well complex elements contained in the phallic worship. To a considerable extent, these variations bring out the process of evolution of phallic worship through ages. There is no doubt that the extant Purāṇa-bulk is the result of samupabṛṁhaṇa style adopted by the Purāṇa-compilers. True to the requirements of the above style, they had constantly left their pen open for incorporating changed practices of later times and also did not feel shy of mixing them with the original account of the texts. In view of this consideration it would be seen that the Purāṇa-passages on this ākhyāna can be put into the following four groups. The passages of the first group give simply the idea underlying the ākhyāna, which was expanded subsequently. The second group of the passages refers to the emergence of the cosmic phallus. However, the passages of this group do not have any reference to phallic worship. Passages of the third group, while giving a detailed account of the narrative, bring out in clear terms the worship of phallus. But reference to phallus as the creative organ of god Śiva is not made in them. In the passages of the fourth group the original form of the ākhyāna is considerably modified. Allusion to the worship of phallus is also made in them. The phallus of their descriptions appears as the organ of god Śiva. The first group of the above passages is available in the texts of Vishṇu,[21] Mārkaṇḍeya[22] and Bhāgavata.[23] These passages describe the process of formation of the Universe and role played by the three attributes, namely; rajas, tamas and sattva. It is narrated that these alone are the three attributes and are possessed of respectively by Brahmā, Rudra and Vishṇu. It is emphasized that these three deities as well as the three attributes are mutually paired and are dependent. They are not separated even for a moment and do not forsake one another. In the text of Bhāgavta these three attributes are described as the three "liṅgas" of the Supreme Being, because of which his course can not be comprehended. The text reads,

> "sa eva bhagavānlliṅgaistribhirebhiradhokṣajaḥ/
> svalakṣitagati brahman sarveṣām mama ceśvaraḥ"//
>
> (II.5-20)

On philosophical level, the "liṅga" of the quoted verse stands for the cosmic covering of the Supreme Being. It is due to this phenomenon that the Supreme Being remains imperceptible for the ordinary eye. This seems to be the source of "liṅga" on the religious level. We shall subsequently illustrate a verse of Liṅga Purāṇa in detail. The text explains the etymological meaning of "liṅga" in relation to phallic worship in a similar sense. Thus, the idea behind the growth of liṅga worship seems to be rooted in the above archaistic passage. In fact the Purāṇa-texts have explained in ākhyāna-oriented style the subtle conception of the Sāṅkhya-oriented philosophy that the formation of the universe is the result of mutual contacts of the three guṇas, namely; rajas, tamas and sattva. The Purāṇa-texts allude to the appearance of a Jyoti or Tejas both of which are used in the sense of blazing fire. This reference is quite valuable in the spirit of the present note. Originally it is free from any sectarian touch. But, subsequently the appearance of a jyoti in a similar process was taken by the Pauraṇikas as the basis of the liṅgodhava-ākyāna. Passages of the second group are available in the texts of Vāyu, Brahmāṇḍa and Matsya.[23A] In its essential aspects the account of these texts is a further development of the philosophical account available in the texts of Mārkaṇḍeya, Vishṇu and Bhāgavata. The narrative in these texts relates that, once Vishṇu and Brahmā were quarrelling with each other. Each was asserting his claim of being creator of the universe. Their controversy was calmed down after the mediation of Śiva, who informed them that they were right and left arms of the latter. Forming integral part of one composite body, these three deities are said to be capable of creating the universe. Appearance of jyoti in the ākhyāna can be equated with jyoti of the philosophical account. It is narrated that a blazing fire was born, when Brahmā and Vishṇu stood close to each other. Out of this fire a jyoti was born, which struck the two deities with wonder and made them curious to know its cause.[24] It seems that, the birth of Jyoti in the account signifies a stage in the process of creation and it is accelerated only when the third principle, namely, the tamas, besides rajas and sattva also plays its role. The narrative further relates that in the midst of the fire an excessively burning "liṅga" was observed by Brahmā and Vishṇu. It would be seen that the reference is here not to Śiva-liṅga, which became an object of worship and led to the development of Liṅga-cult. There is no doubt that, the liṅga is associated in the narrative with Śiva, because the subsequent verses relate that while ascertaining the end of the cosmic liṅga, the two deities ultimately saw god Śiva in their meditation.[25] But the concerned verses make no reference either to its worship or to its being organ of Śiva. The description is not self sufficient to give the exact meaning of the term. However its meaning can be ascertained in the light of other Purāṇas. As shown above, the text of Bhāgavata describes sattva, rajas and tamas as the three "liṅgas" of the Supreme Being. Evidently, the word "liṅga" of the present context, signifies specific quality of tamas attributed to Śiva in the same way as the sattva and rajas are attributes respectively of Vishṇu and Brahmā. Passages of the third group are available in the texts of Liṅga and Śiva Purāṇas.[26] An analysis of these two texts reveals that the older form of the ākhyāna is moulded in them in such a way as to accommodate new and current elements in a convenient form. According to the narrative of these texts, a controversy arose between Brahmā and Vishṇu each claiming his superiority over the other. During the course of the controversy, the two deities observed an all pervading and mysterious "liṅga". A verse of Padma account in this connection seems to be of great significance. It relates that liṅga is Maheśvara himself. It is so called because it makes him imperceptible. The verse reads :

"liṅgam sāksānmaheśvaraḥ layanālliṅgamityāhuḥ"

(XX. 15/2, 16/1)

There is no doubt that, the allusion is here to the incomprehensible and imperceptible form of Śiva in the status of Supreme Being described in the Bhāgavata as possessed of the three liṅgas, namely; sattva, rajas and tamas. These three cover him so that his course is not perceptible. Thus in these passages "liṅga" is indicative of an attribute of Śiva. The conception of liṅga being generative organ of Śiva is untraceable in these passages. Passages of the fourth group occur in Vāmana Purāṇa.[27] These passages signify almost an overhauled structure of the original ākhyāna. Only the basic elements of the original ākhyāna are found in them. These passages also contain another concept, which was possibly very much popular in some sections. According to the narrative once after the death of Satī, Śiva who was chased by cupid came to the Vindhyan mountain in order to set himself free from latter's clutches. Śiva entered the Dāruvana. But cupid continued his pursuits. Here, sages were residing with their wives. Śiva asked the sages for alms. But they remained quiet with their head bowed down. Some of the wives of the sages were attracted, when they saw the divinity in that posture. They began to move after him and left even the care of thier husbans and children. The scene enraged the sages. They cursed that Śiva's organ of generation should fall on ground. Consequently Śiva became detatched of the organ, which entered the nether world and remained upwordly fixed in the universe. This caused much agitation both in movables and the immovables. Seeing these incidents Brahmā was much aggrieved. He rushed to Vishṇu. Together both the deities came to spot where the "liṅga" had been. They found that the "liṅga" had an unending size. Brahmā went upward in the yonder world. Vishṇu went downward in the nether world. But they could not get any success in ascertaining the size of the "liṅga". Thereapon, they again came to the original spot, made a round of the "liṅga" and offered prayer to Śiva with folded hands. Śiva appeared before them in the same Dāruvana and made queries to Brahmā and Vishṇu regarding the purpose of their visit. They requested him to take up the "liṅga" and get it attatched to the requisite part of his body. But Śiva was not prepared to concede to their request unless he was assured that the "liṅga" would become an object of worship. Vishṇu promised that the same will be done henceforth. Brahmā picked up the "liṅga" of golden hue. It is narrated that since then the lord impelled the four castes to worship Śiva in form of "liṅga"[23] The evidence of Vāmana Purāṇa reveals that in certain sections the phallic organ of Śiva was supposed to have its connection with the generative organ of Śiva. The bearers of the Purāṇa-tradition were making attempts to remove the hatred of the people with regard to phallic worship by way of propounding divine recognition to it. However, the combined evidence of other Purāṇa-texts have no answer in their passages to the natural query whether or not the phallic worship was non-Vedic or non-Aryan in origin. The passages under reference simply reveal the Puraṇic technique to treat the meaning ot the term "liṅga" used invariably for phallus, as different from the meaning which had possibly evoked hatred against it. The Purāṇa-passages reveal in clear terms that the term signifies a special attribute called tamas, without which other two attributes, namely; rajas and sattva can not generate the matter contributing to the formation of the universe. This technique must have served as a competent device for making an addition to the Vedic tradition of what is sometimes supposed to have been outside the parameter of the Vedic tradition.

XX XX XX

Writing on Purāṇic account of Sun-worship in ancient India, Hazra[28A] observes that, the conception of the Sun as an imaginary god of light and practice of his worship in images came into vogue at a comparatively late period. But he does not deny the possibility that there arose quite early a fairly extensive literature, both Purāṇic and otherwise, on the praise and worship of this god. Thus a passage in Bhavishya Purāṇa refers to an ancient work dealing with the Saura Dharma as declared by Nārada. The passage reads "sauradharmāśca rājendra nāradoktā mahīpate". Hazra feels that, the work under reference was most probably called "Saura-dharma". On the other hand, according to Bhavishya Purāṇa this work as well as the Mahābhārata, Rāmāyaṇa, etc was designated techincally by the term "Jaya".[29] In this connection Hazra draws our attention to the source of the later phase of Sun-worship to the Magian influence on it. The evidences cited by Hazra are the Scythian coins, the Purāṇic works, the Bṛihatsaṁhitā and a number of seals and inscriptions. These evidences reveal that, probably during the reign of the Scythian kings or even earlier a new form of Sun-worship was introduced in Northern India by bands of Magi priests who called their deity "Mithra" (or "Mihira"). To the answer of the question as to the original place of settlement of the Magas in India, Hazra refers to "Mitravana" on the bank of the Chandrabhāgā in the Punjab. Here they constructed a city called "Mūlasthāna" where they built a Sun-temple containing an image of the deity. This historic temple, with the enshrined image of the Sun is known to have been visited by the Chinese traveller HiuenTsang as well as by Alberuni, AlEdrisi, Abu Ishak al Ishtakhri and many others. The Magian adherents to the worship of Sun had a proselytizing spirit. The evidences also reveal that, the Magians set themselves most zealously to popularising their faith in different parts of India. While Hazra observes, perhaps rightly, that the Magians must have enjoyed state-support at least under the Scythian kings, N.N. Vasu points out the probable connection of the Śuṅga and Kaṇva dynasties as well of the Hūṇas with Mitra (Mithra) worship.[29A] Taking into full account the bearing of the literary sources on the subject, Hazra observes that the Magi priests took full advantage of the long-standing popularity of the deity and of his worship in a symbol which was very often a wheel or disc and not rarely a circle of lotus. Testimony to the above effect is supplied by a passage of Sāmba Purāṇa, which reads, "na purā pratimā hyāsīt pūjyate maṇḍale raviḥ// yathaitanmaṇḍalam vyomni sthīyate savitustadā"// (XXIX. 2-6). The Purāṇic reference is well in tune with the Vedic passages. In a number of Ṛigvedic passages Sūrya has been called Cakra (Wheel).[30] Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa mentions the placing of a disc of gold on the Fire altar to represent Sun.[31] On the basis of a passage of Gautama Dharmasūtra,[32] Hazra further observes that, as Vishṇu, Śiva and many other deities had begun from a very early period to be widely worshipped in images, for which public or private temples were often built, Indian people must have felt a great want in these respects with regard to the worship of Sun, for which the Vedic people had no provision for the construction of any image or temple. The Magas came forward to remove this long felt want. It was due to this contribution of these foreigners that their remarkable success in speedily popularising their faith was due to a great extent.

Without going into the other details of Hazra's notes and observations on the present subject, we are making hereafter an attempt to examine the Purāṇic data on Sun-worship. Our objective is to take into account the passages of early Purāṇas and see how far their approach differs from the Vedic literature and to what extent they have retained the Vedic tradition in the present context. This approach is likely to help us in forming an idea about the Sun-worship in its simpler form as compared to its sectarian form as presented by the late Purāṇic passages. We are first analysing the passages of Vishṇu Purāṇa. The present text was subjected to addition and modifications to a lesser degree. Evidently its evidence is more authentic for the early Purāṇic period. According to this text the essence of Sun is expressed through his immutable light. But, the divinity has been treated as nothing more than the principal part of Vishṇu (II. 8.56). In some passages Sun is depicted only a part of nature. In the prayer of Dhruva addressed to Vishṇu, it is narrated that Sun has emerged from Vishṇu's eye like other parts of nature, and his existence is largely due to the latter.[33] Elsewhere the text relates that, the Sun and other planets are interrelated and are sustained by Vishṇu.[34] Basically these passages of Vishṇu Purāṇa carry out the Vedic tradition relating to Sun. In this context Macdonnel has traced such passages of Ṛigveda which speak of Sun simply as a natural phenomenon.[35] There is no doubt that, Vishṇu's significance increases in the early Purāṇic period. Consequently Sun is still subordinate to him. However, Agni, who occupies pre-eminent position in the Vedic period, loses his superiority. He figures inferior to Sun in the texts of the early Purāṇas. A.B. Keith and V.S. Ghate, both the scholars have traced out a number of Vedic passages, where Agni stands out most prominently and his importance is shared by no god other than Indra.[36] Macdonnel has drawn our attention to a passage of Ṛigveda, which narrates that Sūrya is form of Agni.[36A] The position, however, changes in the Purāṇic period. Thus, while Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa describes that Kāla-Agni is Sūrya himself,[37] the text of Vāyu Purāṇa realtes that, Agni in the form of Kāla is no other than the essence of Sūrya.[38] Āditya figures only as a synonym of Sūrya. Thus in a passage available both in Vāyu and Brahmāṇḍa the term Āditya has been enumerated along with other various names of Sūrya.[39] While emphazing the significance of Avimukta Tīrtha (i.e. Varanasi) the text of Matsya Purāṇa refers to the worship of Sun. The term used here for Sun is Āditya.[40] Sun is called Āditya in the prayer of Yājñavalkya in the text of Vishṇu Purāṇa.[41] This tendency seems to be very rare in the Vedic period. In this context Macdonnel examines some passages of Ṛigveda and observes that, at a few places he bears, matronymic Āditya, son of Aditi. But generally speaking he is distinguished from the Ādityas.[41A] Macdonnel also notices that, there are a few places in the Brāhmaṇa-texts, where the term Āditya signifies Sun.[41B] It is significant to note that, in Vedic literature the term Āditya denotes a group of deities. Their function is to preapare the path of Sun.[42] The number of these deities is said to be seven.[43] On the other hand, Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa mentions without naming them individually, except Mārtanda, that their number is twelve.[44] The seven Ādityas enumerated in the Ṛigveda are; Mitra, Aryaman, Bhaga, Varuṇa, Daksha, Aṁśa and Mārtaṇḍa. The Vedic conception of Ādityas is retained in the Purāṇas. Thus Vishṇu Purāṇa narrates that the Ādityas along with other celestial beings occupy the orbit of Sun and support his chariot in each month.[45] Almost in a similar tone Matsya Purāṇa relates that, these deities lend their fiery lustre to Sun.[45A] Number of Ādityas in these Purāṇas is twelve. They are mentioned as, Vishṇu, Indra, Aryaman, Dhātṛi, Tvashṭṛi, Pūṣā, Vivasvān, Savitṛi, Mitra, Varuṇa, Aṁśa and Bhaga.[46] More than often, the deities of Āditya group are identified with Sun. Pūṣā, Savitā, Aryaman. Vivasvān and Bhaga are the pertinent cases of this identification. In the text of Vishṇu Purāṇa, Sun is called Pūṣā on the occasion, when the deities had assembled before Vishṇu to seek latter's help against the demons.[47] In the same text, allusion is made to the prayer of Yājñavalkya offered to Sun in the name of Savitā.[48] The text uses the term of Savitā and states that the deity causes rains and thus supports the universe.[49] In the description of the northern part of the solar sphere Savitā and Aryman are the terms for Sun in the text.[50] While narrating the religious observances of a householder, the text ordains that he should salute the deity in the names of Vivasvān and Savitā.[51] In the texts of Vāyu and Brahmāṇḍa, Savitā has been described as one of the epithets of Sūrya, who is also called Āditya and Bhānu.[52] These texts apply the term Vivasvān to Sun in the narrative of Satrājit, who was a worshipper of Sun.[53] The text of Matsya Purāṇa enjoins that, on the occasion of mandāra saptamī vrata the devotee should offer his prayer to the Sun in the names of Aryaman and Pūṣā respectively in the south-west and north directions, while on the occasion of the sankrāntivrata it ordains that in the south-west and north directions respectively Sun should be worshipped in the names of Savitā and Bhaga.[54] There is no doubt that, the antiquity of this idea of indentification of

Āditya group of deities goes back to the Vedic period. Thus Macdonnel has sorted out a number of passages of Ṛigveda in which Pūṣā has been connected with Sūrya. Yāska has also explained Pūṣā being the same as Sun, the preserver of all beings.[55] Macdonnel further points out that, there are a few hymns in the Ṛigveda in which it is hardly possible to keep these two deities apart.[56] In one of its passages Ṛigveda, Prasavitā and Savitā have been used for the epithets of Sun.[57] In a number of passages, Savitā and Sūrya appear to be spoken of indiscriminately to denote the same deity.[58] Less clearly Vivasvān has also been identified with Sūrya in Vedic passages. In Ṛigveda he shares in the worship of the people along with Varuṇa and other gods.[58A] However, in both the schools of Yajurveda he is called Āditya. It is quite likely that, this idea was responsible for his identification with Sūrya in Purāṇa-literature. This analysis reveals two significant changes in the Vedic conception. The first is the indiscriminate mention of Aryaman and Bhaga with Sūrya. As shown above, these two are enumerated in the Āditya-group of deities in the Vedic literature. But, there is no passage revealing their identification with Sūrya. In all probability, the Purāṇic identification of these two deities with Sūrya was due to their enumeration among the Āditya group of deities in Ṛigveda and Āditya being a synonym of Sūrya in Purāṇa. Non-inclusion of Mārtaṇḍa in the Āditya group is the second important change. As shown above, Mārtaṇḍa is one of the deities forming the Aditya-group. Although his name is excluded from the group, yet he appears very frequently in these texts. In fact the Purāṇas have also built up narratives in order to explain the etymological meaning of Mārtaṇḍa. Thus the text of Matsya Purāṇa narrates that Sun is known as Mārtaṇḍa because of its flashing out of the Brahmāḍṇa.[59] Giving a detailed account of the same narrative Vāyu and Brahmāṇḍa state that the primeval egg was divided into two parts by Tvashṭā. Apparently, Sun sprang from it in mṛita form. but, really speaking it had life in it. Mārtaṇḍa is so known because it came out of the broken egg.[60] The Purāṇa texts also allude to the chariot of Sun. In this context also they carry out the essential ideas of the Vedic description. The Vedic hymns, in a general way, mention that Sun has a chariot. It is drawn by seven horses.[61] In their usual samupabṛṁhaṇa style the Purāṇa texts describe Sun's chariot elaborately and some more details about its parts, horses and the celetial beings who support the running of the chariot in various ways.[62] On the whole, Sun figures in the Purāṇa texts as a benevolent deity. The root of this conception is traceable in the Vedic tradition. Examining the passages of Ṛigveda, Macdonnel rightly, observes that, in Ṛigveda, Sūrya is not a maleficent power and this aspect of the deity can be observed only in the passages of Atharvaveda and Brāhmaṇas.[62A] In this respect, the approach of the Purāṇas correspond more to the Ṛigvedic conception in so far as they depict the benefactory function of the deity.[63]

We now turn to the Purāṇic account of Sun-worship. According to R.G. Bhandarker in a simpler and crude form Sun-worship was prevalent in the Vedic period. In two passages of Ṛigveda, the singer wishes the rising Sun to declare him sinless to Mitra, Varuṇa and other gods.[64] The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa alludes to purifying aspect of Sun-rays.[65] It is noteworthy that, the archaic and unadulterated passages of the early Purāṇas, too, depict Sun-worship in a simpler form; there being no reference to image-worship or temple of Sun. However, there are some passages which describe the form and appearance of Sun. In the narrative of Yājñavalkya, the Vishṇu Purāṇa narrates that the sage could cultivate the knowledge of Yajurveda only after he worshipped the Sun. The form of the deity is said to be that of a horse.[66] In the narrative of Satrājit, it is related that the divinity appeared before him in its original form, i.e., globe in the sky. The form of the deity was thus quite indistinct. After the request of Satrājit, Sun took the dazzling jewel, the syamantaka from off his neck. Thus, Satrājit could see the form of Sun properly. The stature of the deity looked exceedingly small. It gave the look of a burnished copper.[67] This analysis may reveal that during the period of compilation of these Purāṇa passages, Sun was worshipped in circle, which was not different from his global form appearing in the sky. There was no definite provision for the construction of Sun-image. It is, however, not unlikely that a section of the society was deeply feeling its need. It is yet to be explained as to whether the early Purāṇas give any information about the image worship of Sun. Possibly, we do get this information from the texts of two Purāṇas, namely Vāyu and Matsya. Vāyu Purāṇa describes that in Gayā Tīrtha there are installed four images of Sun. These images represent the four Yugas. It is narrated that, if these images are worshipped, liberation of the ancestors is guaranteed.[68] The account reveals that Sun-worship in image form was popular during the compilation of the text. It was catching sufficient hold among the masses. The importance of religious places was considered to be not only due to the construction of images of the major deities likeVishṇu and Śiva, but also to those of Sun. It is, however doubtful if this passage was ever present in the original form of the text. The portion of the text depicts later elements of Hinduism including advent of Rādhā in Vaishṇavism, Tāntric elements crowding in Śāktism etc.[69] On the present subject narrative of Sañjñā in the text of Matsya Purāṇa is of much significance. According to this narrative, Viśvakarmā's daughter Sanjñā could not bear the dazzling light of Sun, her husband. She began to run here and there in order to conceal herself. Thereupon Viśvakarmā sought the premission of Sun to diminish his power so that the luminary might become agreeable to everyone. Viśvakarmā sliced away portions of Sun's unbearable power. After this Sun became fairly agreeable. However, his feet were still unbearable and dazzling, because he did not allow any power to be reduced from them.[70] Judged in the perspective of chronological order, the present passage seems to be remodelled form of an original account. An intensive study of the extant account reveals that save a few verses (31, 32 and 33), which refer to the construction of Sun-image and its worship, it is entirely free from sectarian touches. It is significant to note that, no one date can be assigned to Matsya Purāṇa. It was subjected to omission and commission in various periods. Consequently diverse social and religious trends are sometimes discernible in one and the same chapter. It is not unlikely that these verses were inserted in the text of Matsya Purāṇa at a later stage with a view of popularising the solar cult by the sectarians. But for the above three verses the account appears to be more original and is well in consonance with the account of Vishṇu Purāṇa. The latter text refers to the coming of Viśvakarmā, who diminished the dazzling parts of Sun in order that he might be agreeable to Sanjñā.[71] The account of Matsya Purāṇa in its extant form corresponds to Sāmba Purāṇa, which expands the above ākhyāna in a greater detail. The text adds that, "as Sun's rays were pared upto the knees, his feet are always kept under a cover."[72] Chapters of Matsya Purāṇa also reveal association of popular elements of Hindu rites with solar cult. Thus, chapters 93 and 95 of the text lay down different kinds of procedure of worshipping the nine grahas. With regard to the mode of worship of Sun it is ordained that the deity should be seated on a lotus. His colour should be that of a lotus flower. In one of his hands there should be a lotus. The other one should be raised in the posture of giving blessings. His chariot should be shown with seven horses being drawn by seven reins. There is no doubt that, these are later additions of Matsya Purāṇa. According to Hazra, they can not be dated earlier than about 650 A.D.[73] Association of popular elements of Hindu rites with solar cult is more convincingly established by the text of Matsya Purāṇa in its chapters 74, 75, 76, 78, 79, 80 and 98. They refer to the gift of a number of objects and observance of vratas for the sake of propitiating god Sun. In most of these chapters lotus represents as Sun symbol. However, chapter 74 clearly refers to the gift of a golden image of Sun. These chapters, too, like chapters 93 and 94 are later additions. We can conclude in view of the above account of the early Purāṇas that popularity of Sun-worship was brought to a very developed stage mainly due to the introduction of image-worship. The resemblance of the ordination of Matsya Purāna to Sāmba Purāṇa is significant. The method of construction of Sun-image described in the text of Matsya is exactly the same as laid down in Sāmba-Purāṇa. Thus, Sāmba Purāṇa was well known during the period when the above mentioned verses of Matsya Purāṇa were written. It is significant to note that in another passage Matsya Purāṇa actually refers to Sāmba Purāṇa. The said passage also mentions that the narrative of Sāmba is also found in Bhavishya Purāṇa.[74] The point which is of special note here is that, while inserting the above mentioned verses, namely the verses 31, 32 and 33 of chapter XI, the text of Matsya makes no reference to the story of Sāmba and the Magian priests of Persia.

The passages of texts like Bṛihatsaṁhitā, Varāha Purāṇa, Bhavishya Purāṇa and Sāmba Purāṇa allude to the supervision of the Magian priests in construction of Sun-image and its worship. The answer of the question has, therefore, to be sorted out as to why the passages of Matsya Purāṇa under reference, are silent about the Magas and their supervision in the construction the Sun-image. Possibly, in some areas mode of image-construction of Sun was the same as that of the Magas. But, the priestly domination of the alien intruders was not well acknowledged. As shown above, a passage of Vishṇu Purāṇa reveals that, the idea of image-worship was not at all absent in early times. Even the Vedic text Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa describes that lord Sun is without feet.[75] It is not unlikely that this Vedic idea is the direct source of Purāṇic prescription of concealing Sun's feet in images. Possibly, the orthodox section of the Hindu society did not wholly accept the religious supremacy of an alien tribe in its national pantheon of which Sun had been an important member right from the Vedic period. It may be assumed that, during the period when Sun worship was being blended by foreign trends, an orthodox group of Hindu society shaped it according to the demand of the age but did not acknowledge the foreign contribution to the acceleration of Solar cult. They maintained its indigenous frame-work to a remarkable extent. They associated with it the popular elements of Hindu rites. This step of the indigenous devotees contributed to the growth of Solar cult in no less degree than the introduction of image-worship. The Matsya Purāṇa is so much enwrapped by the passages alluding to the solar vratas that it becomes difficult to regard the role of the Magian priests as entirely responsible for later growth of solar cult in India.

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43. Ibid, IX. 114.1; However in X. 172.8 they are said to be eight in number.

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58. Macdonnel, Op. Cit. p. 33.

58A. Macdonnel, Op. Cit. p. 42.

59. Matsya Purāṇa, II. 36.

60. Vāyu Purāṇa, LXXXIV - 26-29; Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇā, III. 59. 27-30.

61. Macdonnel, Op. Cit., pp. 30-31.

62. Vishṇu Purāṇa, II. 9.25, II. 10.1 ff; Vāyu Purāṇa, I. 89-90; Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa I. 42-43; Matsya Purāṇa, CXXIV. 9 ff.

62A. Macdonnel, Op. Cit., p. 31.

63. Vishṇu Purāṇā, II. 9.7 ff.

64. Ṛigveda, VII. 60.1; Bhandarker, Vaishavism, Śaivism and other Minor Sects, p. 216.

65. utpavitāro sūryasya raśmayaḥ, Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa. I. 1.3, 6.

66. Vishṇu Purāṇa, III. 4.

67. Ibid, IV. 13, 11-14.

68. Vāyu Purāṇa, CVIII. 36.

69. Hazra, Op. Cit. p. 13, fn.

70. Matsya Purāṇa, XI, 21-30.

71. Vishṇu Purāṇa, III. 2.2 ff.

72. Sāmba Purāṇa, Chapter X.V,

73. Hazra, Op. Cit., p. 48.

74. Matsya Purāṇa, LIII. 61.

75. yadiha vā apyapādeva bhavatvalameva pratikramaṇāya, Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, IV. 5.55.

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